

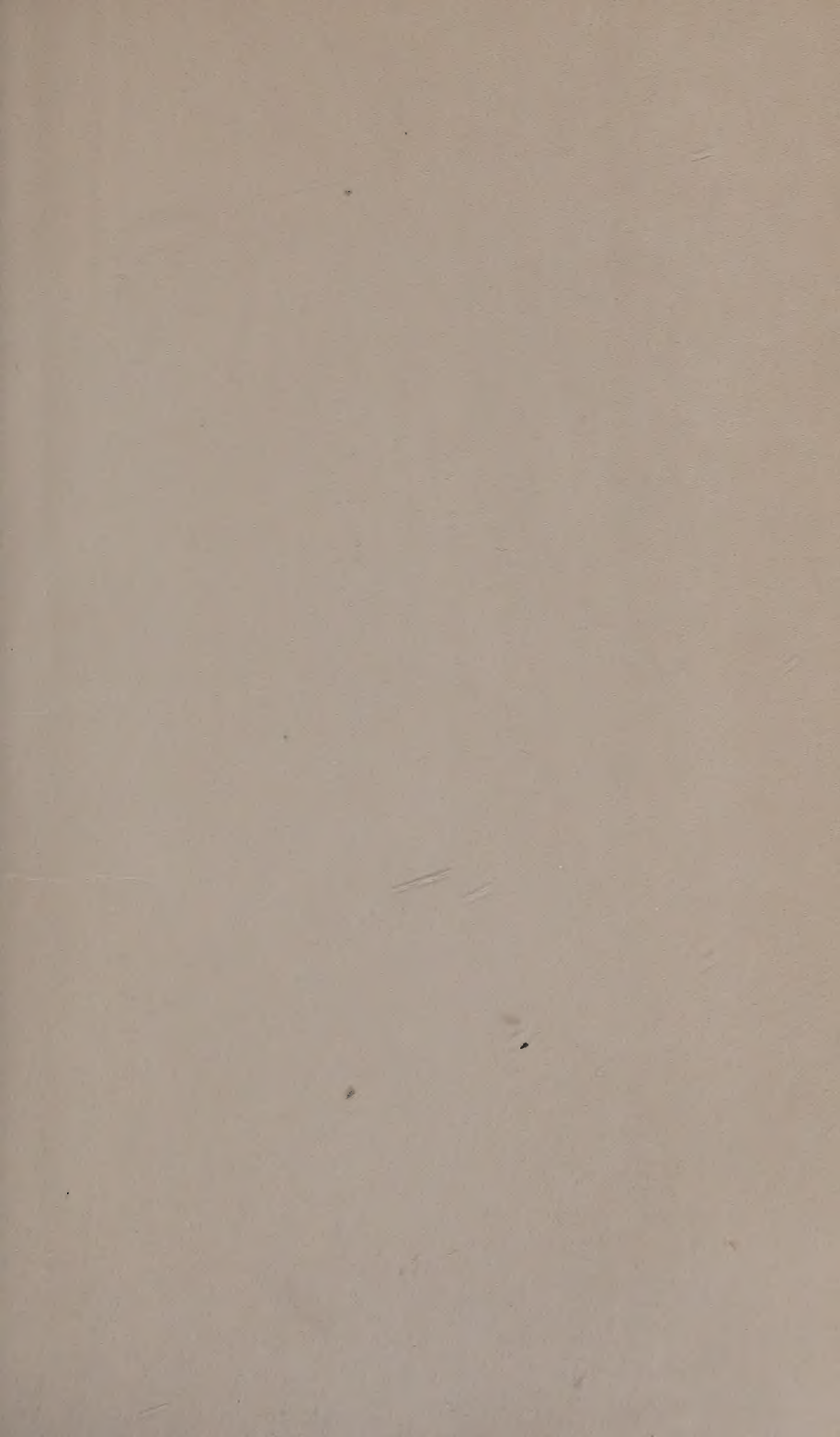
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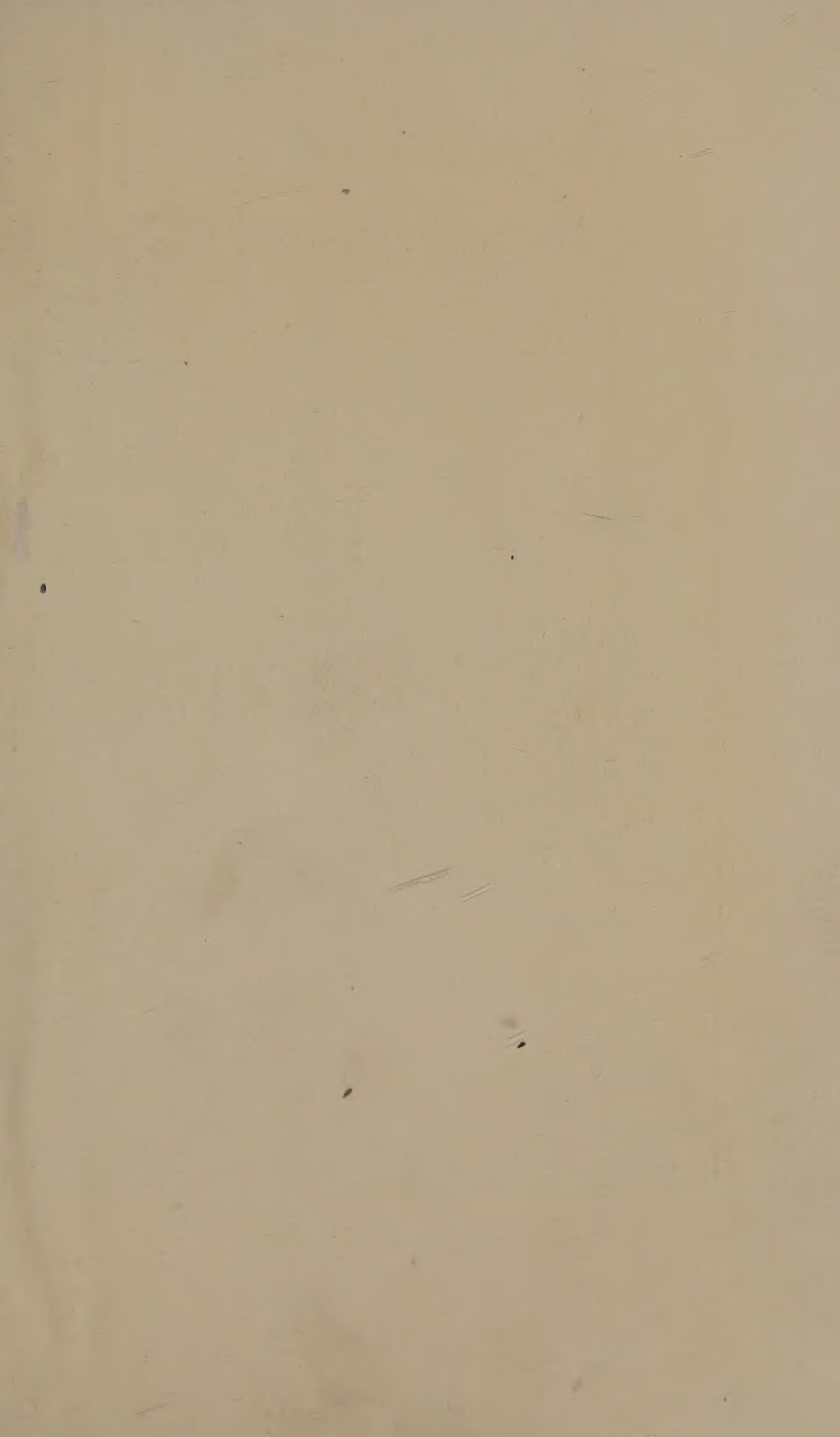
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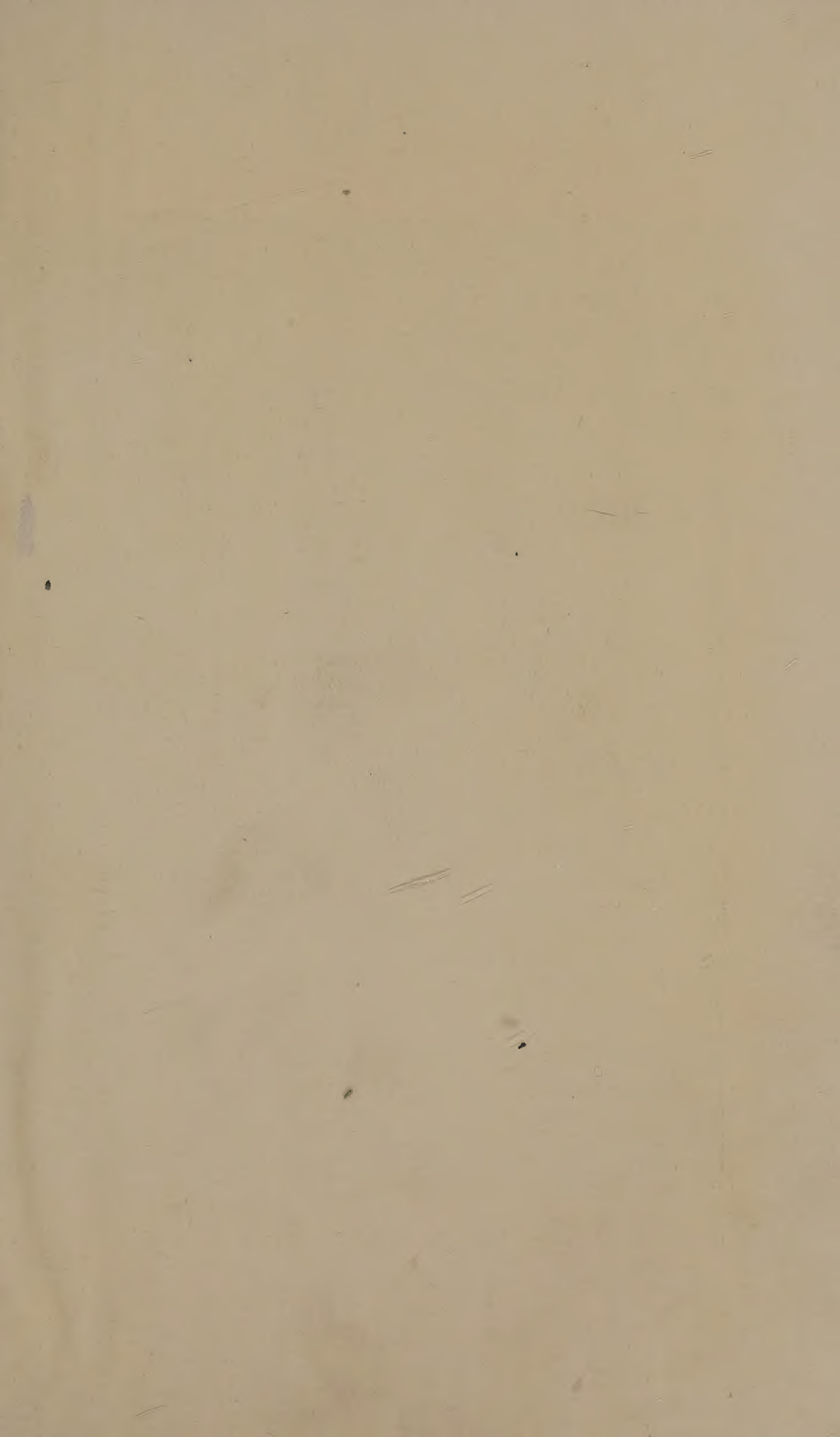


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THE BOYHOOD OF LULLY.
After Hippolyte de la Charrierie.

GREAT MUSICIANS

BY

ERNEST OLDMEADOW

AUTHOR OF "CHOPIN," "SCHUMANN," ETC.

WITH THIRTY-TWO FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

PHILADELPHIA

GEORGE W. JACOBS & CO.

PUBLISHERS

PRINTED IN ENGLAND BY W. BRENDON AND SON, LTD., PLYMOUTH, 1908

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PREFACE

THE following short studies of Great Musicians are published as a companion volume to Mr. Julian Hill's "Great English Poets." Other volumes in the same Series are being prepared. The aim is to provide general readers with little histories of the arts expressed through little biographies of the greatest artists. For example, each of the studies in the present volume is complete in itself: yet the reader who begins at the first page and continues to the last will perceive that he has been following the general trend of Music down to the death of Handel, as well as the fortunes of particular musicians.

Keeping always in mind the fact that he is writing for general readers, the Author has not hesitated to explain certain technical points in popular language. Should any well-instructed musicians (for whom this book is not primarily intended) find such passages tiresome, they may reflect that it is better for the few to be bored than for the many to be bewildered. Nor

need the general reader himself feel that these explanations are disrespectful to his knowledge and intelligence. When so many of our most acceptable novelists, essayists, and political orators habitually misuse rudimentary musical terms, it is reasonable to assume that a little light is needed on such dark sayings as "the supersession of the ternary by the binary notation," or "homophonic effects in a polyphonic context."

As they may appear at first sight to lie outside the four corners of this book's title, a word must be said respecting the opening chapters. The chapter headed "The Great Unknown" not only serves as an introduction to the whole subject but also deals with a question often put and seldom answered. The second chapter is justified both by the immense increase of interest in the ancient chant and by the slowly emerging fact that this rich treasury has furnished materials for later music as abundantly as the Rome of the Emperors furnished marbles for the Rome of the Renaissance Popes.

In owning his great indebtedness to various works of reference, the Author could wish that the debt had been far greater. He cannot hope that even these short and popular studies are free from errors: for

inaccuracy seems to trail all over the literature of the subject. Within recent years a vast amount of splendid work has been done by critics and historians of music in England; but, up to the present, the results are so imperfectly co-ordinated that one cannot rely upon any of the musical histories and dictionaries with an easy mind. For example, Mr. W. H. Hadow's "Oxford History of Music" contains hundreds of pages of the greatest value, but there are too many important matters (such as the chronology of Purcell's works for the theatre) in which no attempt appears to have been made to correct hoary and most misleading errors in the light of modern researches. Again, the "Oxford History" is avowedly only a supplement, for the use of advanced musicians, to the histories of music on a mainly biographical plan; but when one seeks for such histories in English one finds practically nothing on a grand scale save an enlarged version of Naumann, which, though admirable in parts, is disfigured by hundreds of inaccuracies and by scores of perverse judgments. Turning from the histories to the dictionaries, one is heartily, but not unreservedly, thankful for the invaluable "Grove," so lately revised under the direction of Mr. J. A. Fuller-Maitland.

To be querulous over so serviceable a work may seem ungracious, and yet one cannot help regretting that, instead of attempting to mend some of the old articles, the Editor has not replaced them by new ones. For instance, the article on Palestrina, in Volume III, lags years behind the latest results of Palestrina scholarship, while the sentence added, in square brackets, respecting Palestrina's second marriage, is so placed as to suggest (unintentionally, no doubt) a joke in very poor taste.

Unaccredited anecdotes which blur the true character of the musicians discussed have been either excluded from this book or recounted with reservations. But it will be seen that the Author has dissented from the principle of throwing aside every tradition which is not supported by existing documents. The documents which have survived are as dust in the balance compared with those which have perished since many traditions first became fixed. Recent years have seen the too rapid growth of an unsound practice of proclaiming this or that tradition to have been "disposed of once for all" by the discovery of some single document which may have been written at second-hand or by some one with a remote and partial knowledge

of the matter. Hence some recent biographies of musicians are as bald as a prairie after a fire. Yet new documents support old tradition almost as often as they weaken it, and, like reeds which gales have bent and floods have drowned right out of sight, many a scorned old tale is destined to hold up its head once more to the sun.

In his study of Palestrina the Author has tried to hold the balance true. He believes that so accurate an account of Palestrina's life has not hitherto been printed in England, and yet he cannot give it the final up-to-date touch by maintaining that the much-abused Baini was a spinner of fairy-tales. Two or three twentieth-century writers have deliberately ascribed the story of the "Mass of Pope Marcellus" to Baini's imagination; but since passing these sheets through the press, the Author has chanced to find in the pages of Dr. Burney (whose work was not at hand in the first instance) the definite tradition of Palestrina's having saved polyphonic music by means of this Mass (Burney's "History," Vol. III, pp. 189-190). Burney heard the story in Italy before Baini was born.

Most of the thirty-two plates which are scattered

through this volume directly illustrate points in the letterpress. Many of them, such as Rigaud's fine picture of the musicians of Louis XIV, have been photographed expressly for these pages. This remark also applies to the title-page of Palestrina's "First Book of Masses," which has hitherto been rather unhandsomely treated by the cutting out of everything save the composer's head and shoulders, thus making the kneeling Palestrina resemble a standing hunch-back. As for the remaining plates, these have been copied from the works of celebrated painters to illustrate the spirit rather than the letter of the text. They are pleasing in themselves, and they will also serve to fill up in the reader's mind that background of general European culture without which the music of the period cannot fully be understood.

ST. MARGARET'S-ON-THAMES,

November, 1907.

THE GREAT UNKNOWN

FOR nine Anglo-Saxons out of ten Music is hardly two centuries old. They know Purcell's *Full Fathom Five*, and they have heard of Palestrina. But in tracking the bright flood of Music backwards to its source, they halt at the resounding gorge where Bach and Handel stand like two proud castles, or like two humming cities on two bold hills, facing each other across the racing water. They believe that at Händel-berg and Bachstein the navigation ends, and that, after passing a beauty-spot or two here and there, the intrepid explorers who push their canoes through the upper waters will soon find themselves floundering in a dismal swamp, amidst the screamings and gruntings and hissings and growlings of those strange birds and beasts, the mediæval composers.

Some recent writers of popular books on music and musicians have made praiseworthy attempts

to extend this too narrow field of survey. But, unhappily, they have tried to stretch it out at the wrong end. Anxious to be down to date, not only have they reckoned among the classics of music many works of lately-dead composers whose durability is uncertain, but they have even canonized two or three living writers against whom the devil's advocate has some weighty things to say. In other words, they have sought more elbow-room by annexing what may prove to be quicksands just ahead, while all the time they are neglecting wide tracts of solid rock in the Hinterland.

The time has come for a popular discovery of the music made between the birth of Queen Elizabeth and the death of Queen Anne. Such a discovery would do much more than reward the searchers with a vast hoard of sterling treasure. It would act strongly on our musical consciousness. The two hundred years last past have been years of eclipse for English musicians and years of glory for Germans and Italians and Frenchmen ; but the two hundred years immediately preceding the Georgian age were years in which English composers could hold their own

against all comers. To preoccupy the national mind, as so many popular writers have done, almost exclusively with the two un-English centuries in the musical past, is not the best way of raising up an English genius in the musical future.

Broadly speaking, it is time to multiply by two the years which are commonly supposed to have produced interesting and hearable music in the modern sense of the term. No doubt musical antiquaries may profitably go back two thousand years to the palmy days of the Greek theatre ; but simple lovers of music for music's own sake will hardly find it worth their while to add more than two centuries to the two which have passed since Handel wrote his first operas and Bach his first cantatas. It is true that treasurable songs were sung by troubadours and minnesingers five hundred years before Bach was born ; and it is also true that at least one sunny and breezy part-song was written in England while the ink was still fresh on Magna Charta. Again, it is true that the activity of the early contrapuntal writers was so great that the learned Belgian Coussemaker was able, as recently as forty years ago, to

deal with at least five hundred composers whose very names had been forgotten until he revived them in his work on *Harmony in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*. But almost all the remains of the Middle Ages are uncertain of interpretation, and, apart from their historical importance, a very thin volume would suffice to contain everything in them that is worth preserving on purely artistic grounds. In short, the plain lover of music will lose little by ranging back no further than the beginning of the sixteenth century.¹ The only large exception to this rough rule is certain Church music, some of which was a thousand years old when the sixteenth century began. But this exception is more apparent than real; for her solemn and beautiful chant, like the Church herself, stands clear of mere date, and belongs as much to our own day as to an night or day since St. Augustine at Milan heard it with a breaking heart.

Readers who carry in their memories the general chronology of art will not be disposed to

¹ In the first edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* the year 1450 A.D. was taken as the starting-point. This date was a great deal too late for thorough-going students and a little too early for general music lovers.



"ALL KINDS OF MUSICK."
(Early XVth Century.)

accept what has just been said without some further explanation. At first sight this drawing of the line at or about the beginning of the sixteenth century must strike such readers as arbitrary. They know that, for generations before the fifteenth century drew to a close, music's sister arts were flourishing. They know that the master-builders of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had poised the carven vaults of the Gothic cathedrals with so much feeling and skill and daring that the architects of to-day cannot copy them, much less surpass them. They know that such painters as Memling, and the Van Eycks and Fra Angelico and Mantegna had lived and died, leaving behind them a hundred works at which we can still look with wonder and delight. Accordingly, they are haunted by the notion that a man with ears to hear ought to be able to find in the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance great and beautiful music to keep company with the great and beautiful mediæval buildings and the great and beautiful Renaissance pictures.

A little reflection, however, will show that music is not on the same footing with the other

arts. When a painter has a vision of beauty or a decorative impulse, he can express himself by arranging so many ounces of pigments on a yard of canvas, or on a panel of wood, or on a plastered wall. When an architect conceives some grand display of mass and form and light and shade, he can materialize his idea for posterity by shaping and joining so many tons of stone. But the musician's is a different case. Unless his ideas are to die with him, he must find some way of recording the sounds which would otherwise die upon the air without hope of resurrection. In one sense his songs are material; for, as men of science have proved, music is the atmosphere in vibration, and it would be possible to express the Holy Grail theme in *Lohengrin* by an ugly row of arithmetical symbols. But although music has its material, the musician cannot get into direct and permanent contact with this material, and is therefore unlike the sculptor and the painter. When one sees the *Pietà* of Michael Angelo, or the upper part of the *Transfiguration* of Raphael, one can truthfully say, "Here is the very stone Michael Angelo chiselled," or "Here are the very pigments Raphael laid

with his brush." But when one hears Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, one knows that with the particular material vehicle of the performance—the yards of catgut, the half-hundredweight of sounding brass, the wood, the parchment, the iron, the silver—Beethoven had nothing to do. For the most part the instruments have been built up from trees that had not been planted when he died, from mines that had not been opened, from beasts that had not been born. In fact, Beethoven's part in the affair is represented by no more than a faint tradition and some printed copies of a MS. in which he appointed their rôles to unborn drummers, trumpeters, fiddlers, and pipers. It is as though Michael Angelo, instead of leaving solid marble behind him, had left a complicated table of superfine measurements by which generation after generation of sculptors could reproduce the *Pietà*, time after time, in snow. It is as though Raphael had merely handed down subtle directions for executing the *Transfiguration* in coloured sand. The first hot sun would melt the snow, the first strong wind would blow the sand away, thus making the analogy with a Beethoven symphony complete ; for, even

while one is wondering at them, sweet sounds lapse back into nothingness like a rainbow fading from before one's eyes.

Familiarity dulls curiosity. We are so thoroughly accustomed to the marvel that few of us recognize in a fine performance of a musical classic one of the greatest triumphs of mind over matter. In a big finale, when the full orchestra is playing at full speed, the band-parts contain some thousands of printed notes for each minute of the performance. As several melodies and rhythms may be going at once, and as the whole procession of sounds is lit and warmed by ever-shifting beams of instrumental colours, it is essential that each bandsman's doings should be prescribed for him down to a fraction of a second. Yet musical notation has been brought to such perfection that the works of composers who have been a hundred years dead or are a thousand miles away can be performed in almost complete accordance with their authors' intentions.

But this immense achievement of the Western intellect was not compassed in a day. It was consummated only after centuries of effort and

after innumerable blunderings and wrong turnings. Only with the passing of the fifteenth century did the pioneers of modern music find firm ground whereon to build. They lagged behind the architects and the painters simply because they had a darker and more bewildering road to travel.

While the builders were building and the painters were painting, the musicians were spending their lives in theorizing and speculating. Their attempts to write their music down on paper made it necessary that they should be agreed on the main points of musical grammar. Given some particular sequence or combination of sounds, they paused to inquire whether it was grammatical or not. Unhappily, this state of mind led many of them into an error which has cursed music ever since. Instead of humbly deducing a musical grammar from the freely-invented musical literature, they set about concocting a musical literature to exemplify the musical grammar. They did not understand that the so-called "laws" of art are no more than analyses of art's accomplished facts. Homer, who could neither read nor write, did not

conform his epic to the "laws" of the hexameter; on the contrary, the "laws" of the hexameter were humbly spelt out from the practice of Homer and other poets after the event. The judge of music is the ear, reporting to the heart and mind; even as the judge of architecture and sculpture and painting is the eye. Rules are for apprentices, not for masters.¹ But ever since the study of music began, pedants have tutored and governed it according to books instead of according to nature. In China, music came to a standstill because it passed under such complete State supervision that the laws of composition became binding statutes of the Heavenly Empire, of the familiar "obey and tremble" order. And mandarins have never been lacking in Europe to stand over music with their peremptory "Thus far and no further."

It is easy to give an illustration by which any reader who has even the slightest knowledge of notation will understand how the progress of musical art has been retarded by the rigours

¹ Of course musical rules are entitled to a large measure of respect when they are grounded in the facts of nature. See the chapter on Rameau in the present volume. Rameau's physical discoveries, however, only endorsed what was being discovered by the artistic sense of musicians.

of musical theory. Let him go to the piano and strike together middle C and the C above. This, of course, is the octave. Again, let him strike together C and the fifth key above it, G. Last of all, let him strike C along with the third key above it, E. Of these combinations his ear will derive most pleasure from C and E—the major third. Parallel thirds move as pleasantly as two lovers faring arm-in-arm along a flowery lane ; but parallel fifths are like the lovers sulking home on opposite sides of the high road after they have quarrelled. Yet it was not until the eleventh century that the combination with the third ceased to be forbidden or discouraged as a dissonance, and not until the close of the fourteenth did any one muster courage to write a number of thirds consecutively, although such passages are almost the commonest in the popular music of our own day. The octave and the fifth were allowed ; the third was forbidden. Let the reader sit down at the piano and play some simple piece in two or three or four parts, steadily excluding thirds, and he will perceive that this disability alone was sufficient to put any satisfactory harmony and counterpoint

out of the question until it was removed by Franco of Cologne.

This unnatural tyranny seems to have arisen far back in misty antiquity through the system of tuning invented by Pythagoras. Along a square box Pythagoras stretched a single string, with movable bridges. He found that a string shortened by one-half sounded its octave ; that, shortened by two-thirds, it sounded its fifth ; and that, shortened by three-quarters, it gave its fourth. In other words, he declared that the ratio of the keynote to its octave was as 1 : 2 ; to its fifth as 2 : 3 ; and to its fourth as 3 : 4. Because of the beautifully simple progression of these numbers he decided that these three combinations were the three perfect musical concords. When, however, he calculated the ratio of the keynote to its third, he worked it out as 81 : 64, and accordingly dubbed the third a discord. No doubt 81 : 64 has a formidable look at first sight. But, even granting that Pythagoras was right in his measurement, the ratio was not as bad as it seemed. For practical purposes, 81 : 64 is the same as 5 : 4, and therefore the third deserved a place among the

sheep. But Pythagoras drove it out among the goats to wander, like a scapegoat with a curse upon its head, by the Dead Sea for more than a thousand years.

It is possible that the reader, still sitting at his piano, will wonder why no inquisitive musician found out the tolerability and beauty of the third in the course of extemporizing on some instrument. But it must be remembered that no instrument has ever been ahead of the work it had to do and the ideas it had to express.¹ Rude and stammering music was played on rude and stammering instruments. One must no more believe in the musical instruments one sees in paintings of early saints than one must believe in the clock which Shakespeare has put into *Julius Cæsar*. For example, there is the too famous picture of St. Cecilia by Carlo Dolce at Dresden. The virgin martyr suffered death in the second century of our era ; yet Carlo Dolce has portrayed her playing in four-part harmony on a chamber-organ of the seventeenth. The truth

¹ The violin is the most striking case in point. The evidence goes to show that it was reserved for the great executants of the nineteenth century to perform the best violin-music of the eighteenth according to the composers' intentions.

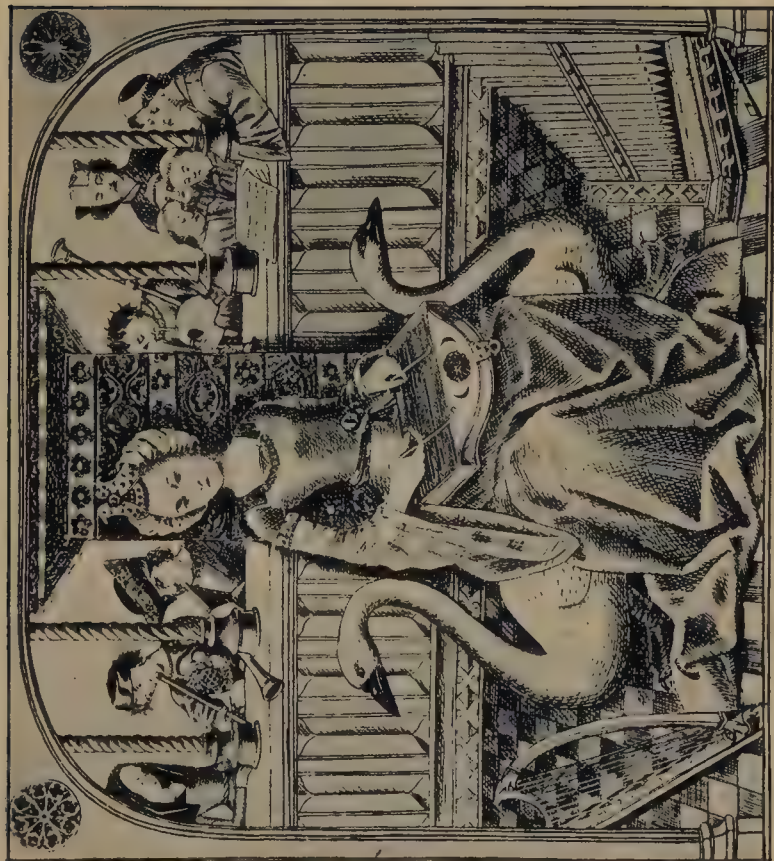
is that, on most early organs, the executant could play only one note at a time. In some of them each key was over a yard square, and could only be put down with the whole hand. Harmonic combinations were therefore unplayable.¹ But, over and above all such small points, the third languished for centuries in exile chiefly because musicians took it for granted that they must get music out of the rules instead of getting rules out of the music.

What most tantalizes the inquirer as he tries

¹ Portable and easily played organs were made at a very early date. But nobody seems to have made harmonic experiments upon them. Such organs seem to have served the same purpose as the monstrous brass instruments which occasionally accompany religious processions in Latin countries. That is to say, the organs merely uttered a sequence of single notes in unison with the sacred chant.

That harmonic effects should not have been stumbled upon earlier is certainly puzzling. Indeed, some writers, flying in the face of the evidence, have boldly asserted that rich instrumental chords supported the ancient vocal music. But beyond the fact that the Greeks "magadized," or played the lyre in octaves, all research points the other way.

Unlike the stage Minnesingers in *Tannhäuser*, the knightly minstrels of Provence thought it beneath their dignity to harp upon their own harps, and instrumental music generally was left to inferiors, thus retarding its natural influence upon harmony. But, puzzling or not, the late emergence of instrumental harmony remains a fact. Perhaps it is not, after all, much more puzzling than the late discovery of the laws of perspective (as illustrated by the Van Eycks' altar-piece at Ghent, which recedes towards two horizons), or than the lateness of the eighteenth-century discovery that scarlet-runners produced good pods and beans to eat as well as handsome flowers and leaves to look at.



MUSIC.

From "*Les Echecs Amoureux*," (XVIIth Century.)

to retrace the road by which music has reached its present position is the frequency with which the theorists have almost found the right track only to turn aside into some blind alley. Pythagoras with his tuning-machine is typical of his successors. The Greeks who followed him, with their unbounded musical enthusiasm and fine musical sense, reached the threshold of great discoveries ; but, like a will-o'-the-wisp, a complicated doctrine of enharmonic scales lured them back to blunder in the dark. Again, in the Middle Ages, the theorists actually drew near to our modern notation with its system of dividing the notes by two—the breve into two semibreves, the semibreve into two minims, the minim into two crotchets, the crotchet into two quavers, and so on—but they strayed instead into a way of dividing notes by three. It is unjust to assert, as some writers have done, that this ternary system was chosen “in honour of the Blessed Trinity.” But it was chosen all the same ; and, after two hundred years of complexity, it had to be abandoned in favour of the binary principle.

Even the nursery piano and Ethel's Instruction

Book represent millions of hours spent by scores of generations of musicians in plodding and discouraging experiment. The black and white keys; the tempering of the instrument; the five lines and four spaces on the printed page; the clefs, the flats and sharps and accidentals, the signatures of key and rhythm—these, and all the other everyday things which Ethel masters in a single winter, are the secretions from thousands of once busy brains whose days and years of racking are over. In a few cases we know the life-histories of these once busy ones. In many cases only their old-world names remain. In more cases still, not even their names have survived. But out of their labours, out of their successes, and even out of their failures, music has been built up.

Music has been compared to an enchanted island of the southern seas into whose bright lagoons men steer for peace and refreshment after the buffetings of the storms outside. One may fairly carry the comparison further, and say that, as our keels grate the shore and our eyes catch sight of the temples gleaming through the palms, we ought not to forget the coral

insects who laboured at the foundations, out of sight for ages, each one adding his tiny arch of limestone to the whole before he surrendered his little life. The first Great Musicians were the Great Unknown.

THE UNCEASING CHANT

THE lucky persons who succeed in writing "the song of the moment," "the waltz of the season," and "the cake-walk of the year," do themselves too much honour. When one of them is sweetly awakened o' mornings by the milkman whistling his masterpiece on the area steps, or by a street piano pounding it out round the corner, he loves to lie abed flattering himself that his sickly or catchy tune is, for the time being, the most widely sung and widely heard bit of music in all Christendom. His delusion is great. It may be true that, through the operations of the international commercialism by which modern art is overlain, his tune will be sounded almost simultaneously in all the music-halls and by nearly all the barrel-organs in three continents. But it is also true that no tune of the moment, not even the very worst, ever becomes so universally current as the music which perpetually

rebukes its insincerity and vulgarity. It is the oldest and not the newest music which commands the most widespread and varied audience in the world.

The oldest music in the world is the chant of the Church—the chant which she uplifts week after week, year after year, century after century, in every clime and nation, amid white men, black men, red men, bronze men, yellow men ; under Arctic darkness and under the equatorial blaze ; in metropolis and in hamlet ; in narrow shrine and in vast basilica. It is in the selfsame strain that the eager young priest in French Canada, the bearded missionary in Tibet, and the silver-haired Pontiff in Rome must all alike chant *Sursum corda* and *Vere dignum* and *Pater noster*. And so primitive, as well as universal, is this sacred heritage of song, that cool-headed scholars have been inclined to identify it with the music of the Psalms and hymns with which Jehovah was praised in Solomon's temple. Others have connected it with the music which so deeply moved Plato. These are guesses ; but it is certain that when St. Ambrose, in the fourth century, set himself to teach his clergy how they might

sing it better, a large part of the chant was already old.

Yet while the chant is the oldest of surviving music, it is also the youngest. It is old not in the sense that Gothic armour and Roman coins and Egyptian urns are old. It is old like the sea and the mountains and the stars and the sun and the moon. It is old without being old-fashioned. It is old in nothing but years ; for its heart is a fountain of beautiful and eternal youth.

At the present day the chant, after long neglect and contempt, is once more coming into its own. One does not need to have passed middle age to remember the days when plain-chant was regarded by the great majority of Englishmen as either a nuisance or a joke. Most people believed that plain-chant was thus named because it was always so very plain, just as they suspected that blank verse was thus called because it was generally so very blank. They imagined that the difference between plain-chant and the harmonized chants of the Anglican composers was something like the difference between "a penny plain and tuppence coloured." The writer of these pages, after putting questions about the church music

current in different parishes, has more than once received the answer, spoken with a shiver and a wry face, "They do Gregorians!" The latest edition of an otherwise commendable encyclopædia gravely assures its readers that the chant is of antiquarian rather than of musical interest; and there are still professional musicians who repeat with relish a foolish story, according to which Gregory the Great, who, for an act of presumption, had been sentenced by heaven to undergo severe internal pains all day long save when he was saying Mass, invented the long-drawn Gregorian chant so as to lengthen his minutes of bodily ease. But although scoffers remain, the chant is everywhere regaining old positions and occupying new ones. During the forty years which have passed since Pius IX took steps to purge the printed editions of their corruptions and errors, incessant labour has been devoted, notably by the French Benedictines, to the textual criticism of the chant; and, under Pius X, who is himself a musician, there are signs that the laity in the nave, as well as the clergy and choir in the sanctuary, will soon be educated to do properly all over Christendom

what they have long done badly in France, namely, to chant the musical portions of the Ordinary of the Mass, as well as Vespers and Compline. In the Church of England also a large amount of hard and often learned and successful work has been done ; while even some of the Nonconformists have admitted parts of the chant to their hymn-books and psalters with the "leading-note" duly corrected.

The proof of the chant is in the hearing. But, after a lifelong soaking in other kinds of music, it is not to be expected that every listener will discern its beauty and grandeur at a first listening. As it is merely melodious and declamatory, without harmony, a beginner may find the chant bald. Again, it will take him some little time to rebuild his notions of tonality ; and this is a point that needs to be explained.

Nearly all the secular music which one hears is composed in two scales only, our modern major and minor. Let the reader who is ignorant of musical theory open the piano and sound in succession the eight white keys from middle C to the C above. His ear will at once



SAINT CECILIA.
After Raphael.

tell him that he has played the major scale. Let him next place his finger on A and strike the eight white keys down to the A below. In this second case he will know that he has played the minor scale.¹ The first scale sounds open and free; the second sounds more painful and plaintive. By looking at the keyboard the reader will see that in both scales he has played six full tones and two half-tones, or semitones. The semitones are from E to F and from B to C. His eye as well as his ear will tell him this; for it is only between E and F and between B and C that there are no black keys.

What has caused this difference of emotional effect between the major scale and the minor? By looking further the reader will find the answer. In the major, the semitones are between (*a*) the third and fourth, and (*b*) the seventh and eighth degrees of the scale. In the minor they are between (*a*) the second and third, and (*b*) the fifth and sixth. This distinction sets up so many differences in the mutual relations of the eight

¹ To sound the *ascending* minor scale the reader would have to use one of the black keys and turn G into G sharp. But as the soundest theorists teach that the student ought to think of the *descending* minor scale described above, there is no need to complicate the argument.

sounds that, although the same wires inside the pianoforte are struck by the same hammers in both cases, their different relationships give rise to two strongly contrasting tonal effects.

Broadly speaking, the secular composers have been satisfied with these two scales. By changes of key (effected on the piano or organ by means of the black keys) they seem to evade monotony; but upon whatever black or white key they may commence it, their major scale always keeps its semitones between the third and fourth and the seventh and eighth, and their minor always between the second and third and the fifth and sixth. And here it is that the humble "Gregorians," the poor Gregorians which are "of antiquarian rather than musical interest," put the secular music to shame. If by shifting a semitone, so that it follows the second instead of the third, Music can produce an effect almost like drawing a curtain across a sunny window¹ or

¹ Upon certain temperaments an abrupt transition from the major to the minor, or *vice versa*, has an extraordinary effect. Before Rossini's *Moses in Egypt* had become hackneyed, people who heard the famous "Prayer" without being prepared for its bold change of scale are said to have swooned away. The writer has lately encountered a striking case of this sensibility in a musically unlearned person.

blowing out a candle, why should not Music still further enrich her resources of expression by shifting the semitones into a still greater variety of positions?

This is just what the "Gregorians" have done. To make the matter as simple as possible, let the reader keep entirely to the white keys and play from D to the D above. This scale or "mode," with its semitones after the second and sixth, is identical with the Phrygian which Aristotle considered the most inspiring of all. Again, let him work upwards from E and he will have the Dorian, with its semitones after the first and fifth. In like fashion he can obtain the rest of the principal ecclesiastical modes simply by starting from the remaining white keys of the octave in turn. He will observe that one of the modes—the Lydian, beginning on C—is precisely the same as the modern major scale. As for the modern minor scale, Helmholtz declared it to be a fusion of the Church's old Dorian, Æolian and Phrygian.¹ It

¹ Popular works of reference, following certain writers on ecclesiastical music, will be found in disagreement with the above passage as regards the identification of the D scale with the Phrygian. They prefer to call it the Dorian, and the E scale the Phrygian. The point cannot be argued here.

follows that the poor musically-uninteresting Gregorians commanded not only our modern scales, but a very great deal besides.

Such being the nature of the so-called Gregorian music, it almost takes one's breath away to hear it said, sometimes even by people with brains in their skulls and without plugs in their ears, that "all plaint-chant sounds alike." An idea is abroad that the boasted variety of ecclesiastical modes or scales amounts to nothing at all except on paper, and that it is merely a faint imitation of the 16,000 keys in which the 16,000 nymphs are said to have wooed the pretty but coy god Krishna. But Plato and Aristotle thought differently. Plato held that the Lydian mode (our major scale) was enervating, and he would have voted for its suppression by law. He maintained, as did Aristotle, that the Dorian was so dignified and virile as to justify the Spartan schoolmaster in using this scale alone for the instruction of youths in courage, reverence, and self-reliance. And so skilled was Pythagoras in prescribing and administering music as a medicine for all kinds and states of diseased minds that he is said to have cured by a song in

the most suitable mode a youth whom jealousy had driven into the beginnings of a mad crime.

The Church, however, taking up the ancient music as she had taken up the ancient architecture and painting, soon carried it to heights of which Aristotle had not dreamed. It has lately been argued that it was not Gregory the Great but a later pope of the same name who added to the "authentic" scales of St. Ambrose the four scales called "Plagal." But the fact remains that either a great or a lesser Gregory did truly enlarge in this way the resources of art. Upon sympathetic ears the authentic and plagal modes fall with a most moving distinction of effect. To say, as some have done, that "the Authentic suggests self-relying man, the Plagal dependent woman," or that "the Authentic symbolizes the satisfying and ever-returning movement of Divine life, the Plagal symbolizing the longing and striving of the world to find in the Divine both peace and rest," is to indulge fancy too freely. But, underneath all uncritical excesses stands the testimony of fifty generations to the power of the ever-varying chant to express all that the human heart can feel of sorrow and joy,

of abasement and exaltation, of faith and hope and love.

The plain-chant notation, with its square instead of oval-headed notes and its four lines instead of five, has an occult flavour: but it gives up its secrets to a diligent student at the end of a few hours. Nowadays, however, it is not strictly necessary to wrestle with this small difficulty, as the whole of the chant in common use has been edited by the monks of Solesmes and by certain commercial publishers in modern notation, at a low price. But readers who have never made its acquaintance as a living body of music must not expect the plain-song to open its inmost heart at the mere hammering of certain notes on the piano. The organ may assist it; but the human voice is the only instrument on which this music can be duly performed. It is called "plain" because it is *planus* or smoothly moving, and one might as well look at blush-roses through blue glasses as thud out the chant on a pianoforte with so many crisp beats to the bar.

The only way for the uninitiated to enter into this goodly heritage is to take a book and frequent a church where plain-chant is sung all the year



SAINT CECILIA.
After Mignard.

through. At Vespers the psalm tones will be heard ranging through the cycle of the eight great modes, and perhaps the psalm *In exitu Israel* will be sung to the wonderful Tonus Peregrinus which, even at a first hearing, subdues every heart. At Compline, in *Te lucis ante terminum*, the chant will prove itself no less able to deal with a metrical hymn than with a prose text.

Of all the doubters who have been converted into champions of the chant, probably the majority date their change of heart from some devout observance of Holy Week in a cathedral or monastic church where the Roman liturgy is fully and reverently performed. Like the music of Wagner's later dramas, the music of the Church was never intended as a self-sufficient art product; it was not made to be torn away from its reverberating architectural background and its austere emotional atmosphere. This fact alone suffices to explain the flatness and failure of the lectures on plain-song delivered by enthusiasts in halls and parish-rooms "with illustrations by a select choir."

A Palm Sunday morning service can impart to a sympathetic worshipper more of the letter and

spirit of plain-chant than he could gain from fifty lectures or a hundred articles. To hear *Gloria laus et honor* in its proper context is a revelation to the jaded men and women who have got into a way of expecting every melody to be enriched with bold harmony, seasoned with incessant changes of key, and coloured with vivid instrumentation. *Gloria laus et honor* is simply a naked strain of melody, wrought out of a mere half-dozen of tones and sung without the organ or any other accompaniment whatsoever. After the Palm Sunday procession, bearing palm branches and a cross, has passed right out of the church and the western doors have been shut behind it, two cantors who have remained inside begin the hymn. The crowd without repeats the strain, singing alternately with the cantors through the shut doors to the end. Then the Subdeacon, without, knocks at the door with the foot of the cross, and the procession returns singing *Ingre-diente Domino in Sanctum Civitatem*—"When the Lord entered into the holy city." In many churches there is a bad custom of singing *Ingre-diente* to jaunty modern music, a sin against art and devotion which has the one sorry merit of

proving even to casual listeners the immense superiority, for its own purposes, of the ancient chant.

It is on this same Feast of the Palms that one may hear the plain-song as part of the greatest music-drama in the world. All round the church the images are huddling under penitential veils. The altars are almost bare, the pictures are hiding behind curtains of violet crape. The organ is silent, and the shadow of the Passion lies over all. The proud hymn and the joyous antiphons with which the long procession of palm-bearers has recalled the Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem are over, and the Church sorrowfully composes her mind to walk at His side all the days of Holy Week, descending through deeper and deeper gloom to the great darkness round Calvary, and the silence of the new tomb in Joseph's garden.

The moment comes for the singing of the Passion. From the bishop on his canopied throne to the humblest believer far down in the nave, every one stands up holding a branch or a spike of palm. Round the throne the palm-branches are so tall that their tops bend of their

own weight into tremulous arbours and arches. The pale spikes in the hands of the faithful are like a forest of spears.

At three lecterns within the sanctuary rails stand three cantors vested as deacons. There is a solemn silence. Then, without any of the usual ceremonious carrying of lights and swinging of censers and kissing of books, one of the cantors straightway begins to chant the Passion according to St. Matthew. It is the duty of this first cantor to deliver rapidly and clearly all the narrative portions of St. Matthew's text. The second cantor, in a lower tone and much more sadly and slowly, sings all the words which the evangelist ascribes to our Lord. The third cantor sings, in a high voice, all the speeches of the individual human actors in the Passion, such as Judas Iscariot, Pontius Pilate, Simon Peter, and the High Priest. As for the exclamations of the crowd, such as "Barabbas!" "Crucify Him!" and "Behold, the King of the Jews!" these are sung by the whole choir, not in plain-chant, but generally to the finely congruous music written by the great Spaniard Vittoria more than three hundred years ago.

The listener whose Latin has become rusty will, of course, follow the cantors in one of the cheap little Holy Week books which give the Latin and English side by side. By the time the chorus bursts out with its first abrupt protest *Non in die festo*, a musical hearer, even if he be not a believer in the historical truthfulness of St. Matthew's narrative, begins to feel that he is at least listening to one of the immortal wonders of music. As for the believers, as they attend at the outset to the evangelist's account of the woman breaking the alabaster box of precious ointment, the grave chanting of the Lord's words, "Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done shall be told for a memory of her," uplifts them on a new wave of faith, for they know that on this same Palm Sunday, to this same chant, in this same Latin, "in the whole world" the prophecy is being fulfilled, and the story of the alabaster box is being told "for a memory of her" who brake it.

The Passion is sung to one of the most beautiful and expressive of all the chants, which could be readily adapted to many other liturgical

purposes : but when Good Friday and the singing of the Passion according to St. John are over, this particular chant is not heard again till the Palm Sunday of the following year. No one knows who wrote it ; but it appears to have originated about the sixth or seventh century, in the happy days when composers had lost all the old musical grammars and had not begun to make new ones. In its present form it can hardly be less than seven hundred years old. As the singing of the Passion lasts nearly three-quarters of an hour, the same melody is repeated scores of times with nothing but the few short choral interjections to relieve it ; yet so subtly are its cadences varied according to the words which are to follow, that only the most careless and impatient hearer can find it tiresome. Quite apart from religious devotion, there are few scenes or acts of equal length in even the most famous operas which one could endure with less weariness if one had to stand up all the time with nothing more than the book of words.

On the Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings of Holy Week the chant becomes still more impressive in the solemn offices of "Tene-

brae" or the Darkness. As the end of each of the appointed fourteen Psalms is sung, one of fourteen candles on a triangular candlestick is extinguished, until, in the final gloom, the Psalm *Miserere* pleads with God like a voice from the tomb. On Good Friday, when the doors of the empty tabernacle are open and the fonts and stoups are dry and the priest is vested in black, the *Improperia*, or Reproaches, are sung in Greek and Latin to chants which, like the chant of the Passion, are consecrated to this time alone.

Holy Saturday is Easter Eve. On this day the curtains are drawn away from the pictures, the veils fall from the statues, the sacred ministers are clad in white and gold, the bells are rung and the organ breaks its long silence with the first crash of *Gloria in excelsis Deo*. On so radiant a feast it is to be expected that the chant will soar up to its highest heights. And the expected happens. From a lofty tribune, as if to show that the joy of the Resurrection has lifted him above the common earth, a deacon bursts forth with the sublime *Exultet jam angelica turba cœlorum*—"Now let the angelic host of heaven rejoice." From an artist's as well as from a churchman's

point of view this is one of the noblest compositions in existence. It is one of the longest solos ever written ; and to keep the pitch throughout, with no aid from organ and orchestra, would tax most of the lions of the opera-house and the concert-room far beyond their powers. So exultant are the words of this incomparable song that for once the Church refuses to be holden by the cold fetters of precise theology, and even apostrophizes the sin of Adam, crying "*O Felix culpa !*" — "O happy fault, which did deserve so great a Redeemer" ! Such words are astonishing : but the music is more astonishing still.

To wander along the aisles of certain thirteenth-century cathedrals, wherein political or ecclesiastical changes have silenced the venerable chant, is one of the chilliest and dreariest sadnesses of a musician's life. A twentieth-century musical comedy in Wagner's Festival Theatre at Bayreuth, or Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth in the Colosseum at Rome, would not be more unseemly than the proceedings of certain organists and choirmasters beneath the hallowed vaults of most famous minsters. There are cathedrals in which, even when full allowance has been made

for the different purchasing power of money, the few and short services cost much more to-day than in the spacious times when the full-drawn ceremonial of the ancient liturgy was enriched by music from beginning to end ; and yet these cathedrals have to be content with music which would be many sizes too small for a suburban parish church. A few unfitting "double-chants" for the Psalms, somebody's tame and tired "Service in G," some other body's trite or sentimental anthem, and the thing is done. The objection to such music is not that it is modern, but simply that it is bad. Amidst those cliff-like piers of hoary stone it is meet and right that the song of the Church should run at full flood, like a mountain stream after rain ; instead of which one often finds it trickling along like a shrunken and tepid runnel after drought. Or rather the Church's song should resound as grandly and peacefully under those dim roofs as a summer sea in untrodden caves.

Like to a summer sea, indeed, is the ancient chant, ever withdrawing to the great deeps, ever returning to break in slow, full cadence all along the shore. To sit near the western doors of a

great church, and hear the chant rising and falling in the distant choir, heals the soul even as a sick heart is healed by the grave speech of far-away breakers. That there are hearers whom the chant offends by its monotony is sad, but not surprising: for there are millions of people who never seek the sea save in crowded spots where they can turn their eyes and ears away from its immensity and majesty to see and hear the negro-minstrels on the beach.

ORLANDUS LASSUS

THERE may be a great deal in a name. To call Orlandus Lassus, as many writers persist in calling him, "Orlando di Lasso," is to strengthen the disastrous belief that Italy has been the most musical of nations. It is true that for a short spell in the palmiest days of Palestrina and his school, Italian musicians were the first in the world. But Palestrina had been taught his business by the masters of the Netherlands. Left to themselves, Italian composers have done vastly more to drag Music down than to lift her up.

Orlandus Lassus ; otherwise Roland van Lattre ; otherwise Roland Delattre ;¹ otherwise Orlando di Lasso ; otherwise Orlandus Lassusius, was no Italian, but a Fleming. He first saw the light at Mons. According to some investigators he was born in 1520 ; according to others in

¹ Delattre is still a common surname in Picardy and Flanders.

1530. There is a similar obscurity as to the birth-year of Palestrina, which was 1514, 1524, 1525, or 1526. It follows that Lassus, who is generally thought of as Palestrina's senior, may have been his junior by some years. But Lassus precedes Palestrina in this book on other than chronological grounds ; for, great as it is, and despite its many anticipations of modern methods, his music as a whole stands nearer than Palestrina's to the archaic period.

Seeing that almost the only instruments for which the serious composers of his time wrote their music were human voices, it was a good day for young Roland van Lattre when he was chosen to sing in the choir of St. Nicolas' Church at Mons, thus acquiring from the outset a practical acquaintance with his medium. As a chorister he also learned nearly all that was to be known of musical notation. And, best of all, he was able to saturate his mind with the finest works of the Flemish and French and English masters.

It is possible to make something better than a guess at the repertory from which young Roland drew the materials and inspirations for his own creative efforts. In the choir of St. Nicolas

his main preoccupation would be the ancient chant with its bold and expressive and varied melody. On the more ornamental side of each week's work stood the motets, hymns, psalms, and masses of the fast-ripening polyphonic school. Foremost among these were the writings of Josquin Desprès, who enjoyed so great a popularity throughout Christendom at the beginning of the fifteenth century that there was hardly a church choir in all Italy and Spain, Hungary and Germany, Flanders and France, by which his compositions were not sung. Like most of the immense reputations of artists in the Middle Ages and in the prime of the Renaissance, the reputation of Josquin Desprès was soundly grounded in sterling genius, and it would be possible to make a deep impression on a twentieth-century audience by a recital of excerpts from his works.¹

Another composer whose writings were held in great esteem was Adrien Willaert. Born at Bruges in 1480, this highly original musician practised his art in Rome until the jealousy of

¹ In the list of composers kept at Munich the name of Josquin Desprès alone was entered in large capital letters.

his fellow-musicians in Pope Leo's service drove him out. Rome's loss was Venice's gain. Willaert's triumphs at St. Mark's made up for the humiliations of St. Peter's. In Willaert's day, as in our own, St. Mark's boasted two organs, facing one another—an arrangement which suggested to Willaert the first great harmonic compositions for a double choir. The Venetians called these compositions *aurum potabile*, or drinkable gold; and they were destined to wield a powerful influence over Orlandus Lassus.

Outside church walls the little chorister heard music of a kind with which modern ears would more quickly feel at home. Many of the popular ballads and love-songs of the day were written in modes resembling our major and minor scales, and with anticipations of our simpler modern rhythm and harmony. The cities of Flanders were prosperous, and town bands and choral societies were not unknown. The performances of the bands will not bear much dwelling upon; but some of the choral societies had already stimulated composers to turn aside now and again from the inditing of motets and masses and to attempt secular cantatas. For example, there



ADRIEN WILLAERT'S MASS.
After Edward Hanman.

was Gombert, a cleric of Bruges, who amused himself in his leisure by writing musical parodies and humorous imitations of birds and rustics. Again, there was Jannequin, who painted realistic tone-pictures with such titles as *The Siege of Metz*, *The Stag-hunt*, *The Capture of Boulogne*, *The Lark*, *The Nightingale*, *The Street-cries of Paris*, and *The Battle*. To imitate storms and fightings and bird-songs on an orchestra, with big drums and trumpets and the wood-wind, is not very difficult; but Jannequin achieved convincing results simply by ingenious part-writing for human voices, without assistance from the organ or any other musical instrument whatsoever.

Artists, however, are made not only by technical training and by the study of their predecessors' achievements, but by full draughts of human joy and sorrow. And Roland van Lattre's cup was soon plenished with sweet and bitter potions. His wonderful young voice drew crowds of admirers to St. Nicolas' Church. But among the auditors it sometimes happenéd that there were connoisseurs who were not content merely to listen and marvel and go away. It was said that the boy was kidnapped on three separate

occasions by the agents of other choirs. In all three cases the success of the abductors was short-lived. The lad returned to Mons ; but not to happiness.

Justly or unjustly, Roland's father appears to have been convicted as a coiner. As a punishment, the unhappy burgess was compelled to walk three times round the public scaffold with a collar of counterfeit coins dangling from his neck. It is said that Roland was himself a witness of his father's degradation, and that the iron of shame entered so deeply into his soul as to drive him from home to seek his fortune. Dropping his disgraced name like a sooty and scorching coal, he began to call himself *Orlandus Lassus* ; and at sixteen he quitted Flanders for Milan and Palermo, in the train of Ferdinand of Gonzaga, the new-made Viceroy of Sicily. He never saw his parents again. Some years later news of their illness reached him in Rome, and he set out at once for Mons ; but Death's horse was quicker than his, and he reached the old home too late.

The young manhood of Lassus has been hazily recorded ; but it has been maintained that, about

the time of his attaining his twenty-first year, he had won the favour of the Cardinal Archbishop of Florence, and was acting as chapel-master of St. John Lateran. During the reign of Queen Mary he is said to have visited England and France in the company of an Italian nobleman. All this is arguable ; but it is certain that in 1555 he established himself in Antwerp, and that the musicians of the city were swift and ardent in their recognition of his towering genius. Indeed, their enthusiasm was so great that the Fuggers, the large-minded merchant-princes of Nuremberg, heard of the fame of Lassus through their Antwerp agents, and brought about his appointment as chapel-master to Albert V, Duke of Bavaria. In 1557 Lassus left Belgium for Munich.¹

Few people will deny that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Germany produced a greater number of first-rank musicians than all the rest of the world put together. But Germans have not always held the musical

¹ As so many of the musicians discussed in this book held posts as chapel-masters and "masters of the children," the plate after Dawant, reproduced at page 62, may interest the reader. Of course the original (in the Luxembourg) is a modern painting ; but one *maitrise* has been pretty much like another *maitrise* for three hundred years.

primacy. They were late in entering the field ; and in the sixteenth century they were proud to import Netherlanders not only as composers, but as executants too. Accordingly, Lassus was accompanied on his journey from Antwerp to Munich by a number of Flemish singers whom he had been bidden to engage for the ducal choir.

Even at the present day Munich, with its Wagner Festivals equal to Bayreuth's own, stands in the forefront of the musical cities. But in the middle of the sixteenth century its artistic position was prouder still. Duke Albert was a liberal and enlightened patron. From Thackeray downwards, the satirists have heaped a great deal of cheap ridicule on German Courts ; but it had been better for England if her royal and national revenues had been bestowed with equal generosity and discrimination upon art and artists.

Sixteenth-century Munich resembled modern London, but with one or two striking differences. To Munich, as to London, the artists of Christendom flocked ; in Munich, as in London, they were better paid than anywhere else ;



A "MAÎTRISE."
After the Painting in the Luxenbourg by Davant.

in Munich, as in London, the natives had a leaning towards foreign music and musicians. But there the resemblance ends. The new musicians whom Munich welcomed and acclaimed and rewarded were often the best men of their time ; whereas London loads mediocrities and charlatans with gifts and honours while they are living, and is often blind to the truth about the great men until they are dead. Again, Munich was not guilty of praising and rewarding singers and mere executants of music more abundantly than the composers by whom the music was made.

Orlandus Lassus was received by Munich not only with delight but with respect. Munich, from the Duke to the meanest citizen, respected him because he respected himself. He took his place in the Court and in the city as a witty and learned and high-spirited and polished gentleman, without any of the ridiculous airs and poses which have disfigured too great a proportion of musicians in all ages. Everybody liked him. One of his contemporaries has placed it on record that "with all his distinguished colleagues he lived so quietly and peacefully that

all were forced to love him, to respect him in his presence, and to praise him in his absence." Again, so great was his personal magnetism, that his singers, "taking courage like warriors at the sound of a trumpet, needed no other orders than the expression of that powerful and vigorous countenance." It is on record that at some impromptu Court theatricals he was the life and soul of the company. It is therefore not surprising that in the year following his arrival in Bavaria he was accepted as a husband by a young noblewoman, Regina Weckinger, one of the maids of honour to the Duchess. Four years later Orlandus was raised from the position of chapel-master to that of chapel-master-in-chief.

To be chapel-master-in-chief to the Duke of Bavaria was to hold the most coveted musical post in the world. It involved the direction of the Duke's orchestra as well as the Duke's choir; and to mark his ascent to the dignity, Lassus was dispatched to Antwerp to secure a new supply of singers. He returned to Munich in 1563, and, declining a tempting post at the Court of Saxony which would have involved his becoming a Protestant, settled down to write

the compositions by which he will live as one of the immortal musicians.

Lassus is believed to have been the most prolific of all the great composers. His works have been said to number 2500, including 51 masses, 180 settings of the Magnificat, 233 madrigals, 59 canzonets, and 371 French songs. The seventeen volumes of *Magnum Opus Musicum*, published in 1604 by his two sons, contain 516 of his motets; yet 264 seem to have been omitted. Of his *Cantiones Sacrae*, 429 are still in existence. A complete edition of all these works is in course of publication (by Breitkopf and Härtel) which will extend to sixty volumes.

Perhaps Lassus is best remembered nowadays by his *Penitential Psalms*, by his mass *Quinti Toni*, by his *Stabat Mater*, by his brief but glorious *Adoramus Te Christe*, and by his motet *Gustate, Videte*.

Gustate, Videte is entitled to survive on its merits. But this motet has been cherished on other than musical grounds. For many generations pious folk in Munich associated it with a picturesque miracle. Tradition declares that on

the feast of Corpus Christi, 1584, a frightful storm of rain and thunder and lightning broke out just as the Prince Bishop of Eichstädt was about to issue from the great doors of St. Peter's Church and to bear the Blessed Sacrament in solemn procession through the city. Duke Wilhelm, who had succeeded Albert V, sent men up the tower to signal the end of the storm. But the skies grew blacker and blacker, until the Duke gave up all idea of the outdoor procession in despair, and bade the clergy carry the sacred Host, accompanied by the prescribed chant, to the western doors and no further. It happened that the words to be sung were *Gustate, Videte*—"O Taste and See how gracious is the Lord." No sooner had the singers delivered these words, to the music of their leader, Lassus, than the rain ceased, the sky cleared, and the procession passed out to thread the streets of Munich in brilliant sunshine. Not a drop of rain fell, not a distant peal of thunder muttered, until all had regained the portal. Then the heavens once more grew dark, the thunderbolts crashed, the lightning blazed, and the rain came down in a deluge. For a long time afterwards it was the custom to sing

Gustate, Videte in connexion with prayers for fine weather.

As for the *Penitential Psalms*, the penitence they express is so deep and vast that somebody who heard them in the seventeenth century invented a striking story to explain it. Taking as a foundation the proved fact that, in 1571, Lassus went to Paris and to the Court of Charles IX of France, this ingenious story-teller built up a fanciful superstructure of anecdote according to which the French king persuaded the Bavarian chapel-master to compose his *Penitential Psalms* as a magnificent outlet for the royal remorse and grief after the massacres of St. Bartholomew's Eve. The truth is that the *Penitential Psalms* had been finished more than seven years before the massacres began. But, in this instance, the fact is surely better than the fiction. It is good to know that in these inestimable compositions Lassus was giving utterance to the sorrow of the universal human heart, and that he was not merely a courtly and talented hireling fulfilling a grandiose commission. It is true that Duke Albert is said to have suggested the work, and the Library at Munich still treasures the

ducal copy written by Lassus on parchment with his own hand, and bound in four volumes with clasps and locks and shields and corners so rich that the silver alone weighs twenty-four pounds. But the *Penitential Psalms* would certainly have been set to music by Lassus in any case, for they are abrim and astir with the emotions to which his nature replied most completely. Indeed, when Duke Albert died, it was in a further set of *Penitential Psalms* that Lassus uttered his own grief.

Like all the great men who have sorrowed nobly, Orlandus Lassus knew how to laugh, both in his life and in his art. The black shadows of death and judgment in the *Psalms* were cast by the bright lights of life and human joy. Hence it is not surprising that he wrote many hundreds of tender or jovial songs and choruses in praise of love and wine. But, with the oncoming of old age, the lights dwindled and the shadows increased. He who had taken the name of "Lassus"—"the weary one"—passed his last years in gloom of soul. Honours had been heaped upon him. The Emperor had invested him with knighthood, the Pope had bestowed

upon him the insignia and dignities of the Golden Spur. To the end the Dukes of Bavaria remained his whole-minded admirers and open-handed patrons and true-hearted friends. His wife and family returned the great love he bare them. But the writing of his thousands of works and his daily labours at church and at Court had made him weary indeed.

His contemporaries believed that not even Palestrina was the equal of Orlandus Lassus. But it is unnecessary to try and decide whether they were right or wrong : just as it is unnecessary to pit Albert Dürer against Michael Angelo. Lassus was a son of the North ; Palestrina a son of the South. If the works of Palestrina were the more majestic and serene, the works of Lassus were the more adventurous and strenuous. But such contrasts ought not to be insisted upon : for during his fifty creative years Lassus produced works in so many forms and styles that he refuses to be summed up in two or three clean-cut sentences. If a comparison with Palestrina must be made, it is well to confine it to two characteristics of his ecclesiastical music. As regards the spirit of their work, Lassus was

more of the church militant, Palestrina more of the church triumphant. As regards the letter, Palestrina had the finer gift for investing each of the component parts, as well as the whole, of a composition with melodic beauty ; while Lassus was often more harmonic than polyphonic, and subordinated the parts to the whole.

For readers who have no opportunities of hearing or perusing the works of Lassus, a hint of Mr. Sterndale Bennett's is better than nothing. Almost everybody has a copy of Handel's *Messiah* ; and, as Mr. Sterndale Bennett has happily said, almost everybody can get some notion of Orlandus Lassus, on one side of his work, by turning to the two short *Messiah* choruses *For as in Adam* and *Since by Man came Death*, which are certainly not the two weakest movements in Handel's strongest oratorio.

A devout son of the Church, Lassus had made a pilgrimage in the autumn of 1585 to the Holy House of Loretto on the shores of the Adriatic. In the following year his health began to fail. Duke William presented him with a country house, at Geising on the Ammer. In 1587 the Duke listened kindly to his chapel-master's



REX SOLOMON *pro nobilibus fuerunt nomina* Dulcis opum, sapientie, potentie, popularitatis, imperatus. Mortalis dominus regnavit ab ista beatus Dulce carceri carceris, tholung, Encomia cordi.
Exultat illi sua iam *Amabilem uiribus* *Acceptis imperis et consilioribus inter* *Hec reges grati sui suspensum non.* *Carmine huius de regis sit mysticis fregit*

Carthica C. i. V.

Apolline Exultat

Maria de Vos omnia

KING SOLOMON.

After De Vos. The open Choir-book shews the manner of printing: Four-part Masses at the time of Orlandus Lassus and Palestrina.

petition for some relief from his hard routine, and gave him leave to reside at Geising with his family for part of the year. In consideration of these privileges, Lassus' direct emoluments were reduced by 200 florins a year; but the Duke was careful to add :

On the other hand, we appoint his son Ferdinand as a member of our chapel at a salary of 200 florins; and, at the same time, to his other son Rudolph, who has recently humbly asked our permission to marry, we grant his request and confer upon him the place of organist with a salary of 200 florins, on condition that he undertake the education in singing and composition of the young gentlemen of the choir.

Orlandus returned to his post in 1588. One of his last compositions was a Mass for the Dead, containing a *Requiem Aeternam* so beautiful that it is fair to find in it the weary one's own prayer for rest. He died on 14 June, 1594, and was buried in the cemetery of the Franciscans.

A book on the great musicians is worse than useless unless it can impel the reader to hear the great music. But one must face the fact that, in by far the larger number of English-speaking towns and cities, a man who wishes to hear the

grand works of Josquin Desprès, of Orlandus Lassus, of Palestrina, of Sweelinck and of their company must wish in vain.

There is no need that this widespread musical famine should last for ever. The polyphonic masterpieces are not like the writings of Berlioz and Wagner and Tschaikowski, which require unwieldy and expensive orchestras for their interpretation. The materials for performing a selection of the psalms and motets of Lassus and Palestrina exist in nearly every parish. These works are not written to be played by several fiddles and flutes and trumpets. They were written to be performed by the most perfect musical instrument ever imagined—that is to say, by several human voices. Further, they were written at a date when musical notation had become clear. It follows that wherever half a dozen industrious enthusiasts can be gathered together the treasures of the sixteenth century can be unlocked.

Men and women who are proficient upon stringed instruments delight in coming together for snug little chamber-recitals of concerted music. It is a pity that good singers rarely

follow the players' example. The country is full of gifted and well-schooled amateur vocalists who do not shrink from attempting the biggest songs in the classical oratorios and music-dramas; and yet it is quite a rare event for half a dozen such vocalists to join forces in an equally good motet or madrigal or other ensemble. Apart from its high art interest, the later sixteenth century repertory is a fountain of delights to singers if only because this unaccompanied music both refines and emboldens the voice to an astonishing degree. Besides, a little band of vocalists with a few of the early choral masterpieces at their tongues' ends is the most mobile of musical forces. It has no heavy instruments to carry about; yet without an ounce of apparatus it is capable of recalling all the radiant freshness of music's golden morning.

PALESTRINA

SEVEN leagues from the heart of Rome, upon a hoary spur of the Apennines, stands the tumbling town called Palestrina. But Palestrina is only a modern and Christian name for Praeneste, one of the most ancient of pagan seats. The crowded mediæval and Renaissance buildings of Christian Palestrina are founded and grounded in the giant substructures of a single pagan temple—the Temple of Fortune, said to have been the largest fane out of Asia, whose oracle drew to Praeneste the matrons of all Italy. When Rome was young, Praeneste was already old. Upon many a battlefield the warriors of Praeneste and of Rome fought—now as allies, now as foes. When Rome waxed and Praeneste waned, the emperors and nobles and poets of the Eternal City turned lofty Praeneste into a city of pleasure. Hadrian built there a villa; Antoninus a palace. Horace broke nuts from

the tall stems of its copses and plucked roses amid the thorns of its gardens.

Four hundred years ago Palestrina was dominated by the chief castle of its proud lords the Colonnas. The palace of the Barberini, which is one of the sights of the place to-day, had not been built; but the town was much more important at the beginning of the sixteenth century than it is at the beginning of the twentieth. Among its inhabitants were Sante Pierluigi and his wife, Maria Gismondi, a peasant-pair who seem to have been honest, but not (as some writers have suggested) grindingly poor. A few years ago the will of Sante Pierluigi's mother was brought to light. To Sante and his brother Francesco the old lady bequeathed a house in Palestrina, conditionally on their providing certain money for their sisters Nobilia and Lucrezia. Further, she left behind her so huge a store of mattresses, bed-linen, and cooking utensils, that Signor Cametti (who discovered her will and testament) suggests¹ she may have carried on

¹ In the *Rivista Musicale Italiana*, Vol. X (1903), p. 517. These details are given because the fables about Palestrina's poverty have been lately re-coined in several publications.

the business of an innkeeper. Maria Gismondi also was possessed of property.

To this couple was born, probably in 1526, a son named by his parents Giovanni Pierluigi. It may or may not be true that the child partly owed his sense of beauty and grandeur to the fact that the air he breathed was charged with the natural loveliness and historic glory of old Praeneste; but it is certain that he gave back more to his native town than it had given to him. Millions to whom its very name would otherwise be unknown are familiar with it, simply because its most famous son grew up to be known as Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, "John Peter Louis of Palestrina"—in Latin, Joannes¹ Petraloysius Praenestinus.

Like Orlandus Lassus, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina learned the art and craft of composing music by spending some years in performing it. It was soon discovered that he "had a voice," and his mother is said to have sold a plot of land so as to provide for her boy's musical training. The family conclave concerning Gio-

¹ His grandmother's will, dated 1527, bequeathed to "Jo" (i.e. Joannes) a mattress and ten pewter dishes.

vanni's choice of a career appears to have been held about 1539; and it is on this ground that 1524 (as given by Palestrina's enthusiastic biographer Baini) seems more plausible as the date of his birth than 1514—the date favoured by several later historians.¹ That the pupil's serious musical education should not have begun till he was twenty-five years old is unlikely in the extreme. Indeed, he himself declared, in dedicating one of his compositions to Sixtus V, that he had been devoted from boyhood to the study and to the diligent practice of music.

From the limestone height on which their town was built, the citizens of Palestrina could gaze across the Campagna to the walls and towers of Rome. Only a dozen years had passed since the sack of the city by the Constable de Bourbon; but already the eye could rest upon proud sights. Old St. Peter's was still standing; but around its crumbling stones the enormous walls of Bra-

¹ e.g. Kandler and Bäumker, who were misled by the inscription *Vixit prope octogenarius* ("He lived to be nearly an octogenarian") on the frame of a portrait in the pontifical archives. This inscription, however, turns out to be of later date. In 1886, Dr. Haberl found in the same archives a note by an eye-witness of Palestrina's funeral to the effect that the musician lived sixty-eight years, thus fixing the date of his birth as 1526.

mante's vast basilica had already begun to rise. Paul III was seated on the throne of the Fisherman ; and, although Raphael had been dead for twenty years, the artistic life of Rome was still in full flow, and Michael Angelo was hard at work finishing *The Last Judgment*.

Music, however, was lagging behind. All the leading musicians in the city were Belgians, Spaniards, and Frenchmen. That these men were non-Italians matters not at all. The point is that their music was not as grandly conceived and as finely executed as the contemporary Italian architecture, sculpture, and painting. It was the hour for a Man, and the man came. In 1540 the peasant's son from wind-swept Praeneste descended to the banks of the Tiber.

The pitiless blast of modern research has blown away almost all the statements of the dictionaries and encyclopædias as to the sources of young Pierluigi's musical education in Rome. Until recently there was a picturesque tradition that the lad acquired the Netherlander technique of composition from the Fleming, Claude Goudimel (who ultimately became a Huguenot), and that he caught the grand style from Orlandus

Lassus, "at that time chapel-master of St. John Lateran." It seems certain, however, that Goudimel was never in Rome, and it is probable that Orlandus Lassus had nothing to do with St. John Lateran until Palestrina was the father of a family and fairly launched in his profession. M. Brenet¹ has elaborately developed the suggestion that Palestrina's master was Tommaso Cimello; but the one sure fact is that, whoever may have been his masters, Palestrina was schooled in Netherlander ways of composition.

In 1544 the youth returned to his native town as a practising musician. His contract with the cathedral chapter still exists. In exchange for the income of a canonry, he engaged himself, for life, to be present every day at mass, vespers, and compline, and to teach singing to the canons and choristers.

Like John Sebastian Bach, one of the few musicians who can be mentioned with him in the same breath, Palestrina spent years directing the daily services and dinning the rudiments of music into the small heads of choristers.

¹ *Palestrina*. Par Michel Brenet, Paris, 1906.

The work may have been tiresome but it was not a waste of labour : for when, many years after, the time came for Palestrina to undertake the reform of church music, it must have been an incalculable advantage to have become saturated with the sacred liturgy, not only at the Vatican basilica of St. Peter and at St. John Lateran, "the mother and head of all the churches of the City and of the world," but in the homely cathedral of a small hill-town as well.

Modest to a fault, Palestrina did not foresee his fame. In 1548 he married. To marry was to forfeit nine-tenths of one's chances as regards the great musical appointments in Rome ; for unmarried singers were preferred, partly for reasons of ecclesiastical discipline, and partly out of reverence for the divine praises of which the singers were, so to speak, the celebrants and ministers. But although Palestrina appears to have married without realizing that he was thereby imperilling a resplendent career, it does not follow that a clear vision of his future would have held him back ; for his marriage was a marriage of affection. Lucrezia, his bride,

brought him not only a serviceable dowry, but a person which pleased him and a heart which became one with his own. Their deeply happy union endured for more than thirty years.

Probably the engagement "for life" with the chapter of his native town was a one-sided bargain by which the chapter was bound to retain Pierluigi as long as he was happy in the cathedral-church of St. Agapitus, but powerless to hold him any longer than he wished to stay. He served seven years, and then turned his face once more to the Eternal City.

The Roman progress of Palestrina as a recognized musician began in 1551, when he became master of the Cappella Giulia. His full Italian title, *maestro di cappella della basilica vaticana*, resounded so magniloquently that the six scudi which made up his monthly salary clinked rather meanly in comparison. Allowing for the altered purchasing-power of money, six scudi a month would be about equal to two English pounds a week. But the young chapel-master was satisfied with his lot. Within three years of his arrival in Rome he had written and printed a volume of five masses, which he dedicated to Julius III, the

reigning pontiff.¹ Julius was pleased ; and in January, 1555, he appointed Palestrina as one of the pontifical singers in the Sistine Chapel, with an increased stipend.

As everybody knows who has had intimate dealings with them, the singers in church choirs are the most easily ruffled of men. The choir of the Sistine Chapel was no exception, and Palestrina's advent was warmly resented. So far as they went, the singers' objections were not unreasonable. Their constitution was explicit, and they maintained that even the Holy Father himself had no right to thrust a new member into their body without the prescribed examination. Moreover, Palestrina's voice was not satisfactory. Their Spanish secretary recorded a protest in the minutes, and the choirmen generally turned cold shoulders upon their new colleague. Unhappily, Pope Julius died only a few weeks after he had taken Palestrina under his protection. To Pope Julius succeeded Marcellus II, whose reign lasted no more than twenty-three days. The summer

¹ The plate facing this page is a photographic facsimile of the title-page of Palestrina's first book of masses. The photograph has been specially made for this work from the 1572 edition in the British Museum.



IOANNIS PETRI

Loyſij Praeſtini in baſilica

S. Petri de vrbꝫ capellae

Magiſtri.

MISSARVM LIBER PRIMVS.



TITLE-PAGE OF PALESTRINA'S FIRST BOOK OF MASSES.

had hardly begun before Marcellus' successor, the energetic and thoroughgoing Paul IV, was hard at work on the reforms which distinguished his pontificate. His zeal began at home, in his own Sistine Chapel. Inquiry showed that two other singers as well as Palestrina were married men ; and by the last day of July the strict letter of the Chapel's law had been enforced and the trio had been cast out. The iron hand of the reforming Paul struck, however, in a velvet glove ; for a pension of six scudi a month was granted to each one of the ejected three.

At so sorry and sudden an ending to his good fortune, the gentle Palestrina sickened and took to his bed. There is only one Sistine Chapel ; and the moment of losing one's place therein must be one of the few moments when even the healthiest and most sanguine of men cannot easily comfort himself by saying that there are as good fish in the sea as ever were taken out of it. It is true that the Pope's action had delivered the proud and sensitive Italian from the pin-pricks of the jealous Iberians and Netherlanders who were his fellow-singers ; but, as Palestrina looked from his sick-bed at

his three little children, this was meagre consolation.

The cloud soon sailed away. Within a few weeks of his humiliation, the rejected of the Sistine Chapel found himself chapel-master of St. John Lateran, the proud and renowned basilica where the young Orlandus Lassus had so lately directed the music. As Paul IV did not withdraw his pension, Palestrina's revenues sufficed for the upkeep of a pleasant little home on the Cœlian Hill, where he was near to his work at the Lateran but far from the turmoil of Rome. This tranquillity endured for five years.

The eleven Popes who ruled the Church during the four-and-forty years of Palestrina's life in Rome differed one from another in countless respects; but they were all of one mind concerning the musician from old Praeneste. Even Marcellus II seems to have spent a fraction of his three weeks' reign in showing kindness to the young chapel-master, as appears from the grateful naming of the famous *Mass of Pope Marcellus*. Pius IV, in whose pontificate this mass was performed, praised it in words of stately

eloquence, and declared that John Peter Louis of Palestrina was a new John bringing down to the church militant the harmonies of that "new song" which John the Apostle heard in the holy city of the church triumphant. Gregory XIII, the musician-pope at whose feet Palestrina laid the MSS. of his grandest motets, entrusted him with the sacred task of revising the ancient chant. Nor was all this papal patronage merely good-natured or indiscriminating. When, in 1585, Palestrina made too much haste to flatter the newly-elected Sixtus V by inscribing to him a hurried and uninspired composition, the pontiff remarked, with keen critical discernment, that the musician appeared to have mixed together parts of his *Mass of Pope Marcellus* with bits of his *Motets on the Song of Solomon*.¹ But, in speaking so, Sixtus was not indulging the small-mindedness of a weak man anxious to differ at all costs from his predecessors; for when, two years later, Palestrina produced his beautiful mass, *Assumpta est Maria*, the enthusiasm of Sixtus took a practical form.

¹ "Il Pierluigi ha dimenticato la Messa di Papa Marcello ed i Motetti della Cantica."

Under this high and enlightened patronage Palestrina worked five years at the Lateran, ten at the Liberian Chapel of Santa Maria Maggiore, and twenty-three at St. Peter's. At St. Peter's, of course, this was his second term as chapel-master ; but it lasted from 1571 to the day of his death. From the fact that he was able, in 1577, to give his daughter-in-law thirteen hundred scudi, and from the further fact that he is known to have bought land and houses and vineyards in and about Rome, it is evident that he was not underpaid. Palestrina was not continuously and perfectly happy ; for continuous and perfect happiness is never to be thought of in the case of a professional musician compelled by circumstances to rub against other professional musicians every day. But, broadly speaking, he was happy in his work, in his home, and in his friendships. Himself a devout believer, he counted among his intimate friends two saints whom the Church has already canonized—Saint Carlo Borromeo and Saint Philip Neri. Yet neither worldly glory nor unworldly piety staled or withered his homely affections. At the jubilee of 1575, Gregory XIII being Pope, when fifteen

hundred pilgrims from the city of Palestrina descended the hills and tramped over the Campagna, it was their old townsman Giovanni Pierluigi who led their songs as they entered Rome, their maidens clad in white and their youths bearing boughs of olive.¹

So much for Palestrina's unexciting life. It is time to speak of his work. The matter bristles with controversy; but the reader who takes the trouble to consider it will not complain that he has wasted his time. To understand the achievement of Palestrina is to understand many other things which are too vaguely known to the majority of musical people.

Stated briefly, it is the traditional glory of Palestrina that he became "the saviour of church music" by composing the *Mass of Pope Marcellus* at the moment when the Council of Trent had all but decided to banish from the

¹ The town of Palestrina is still proud of its illustrious son, but his works are even less studied by the citizens than are the tragedies of Shakespeare by the natives of Stratford-on-Avon. At the Palestrina tercentenary in 1894 it is true that the *Mass of Pope Marcellus* was sung at St. Agapitus in the morning, but the chief attractions were a tombola, a horse-race, and a display of fireworks.

sanctuary every kind of music save the liturgical chant. During the nineteenth century there arose, however, learned writers who declared that this tradition was baseless from beginning to end, and that the writings of Palestrina are honourable only on their intrinsic merits.

Before Palestrina's part in the so-called salvation of church music can be discussed, the matter as a whole calls for a rather long commentary. It is necessary, first of all, to describe the condition of church music at the time when Palestrina is alleged to have saved it.

For the sake of brevity, the inquiry must be confined to the music of the Mass. Theological arguments can have no place in this book ; but it is a simple historical fact, beyond all reasonable controversy, that during the period about to be discussed (that is to say, from the thirteenth century to the sixteenth), Mass, or the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, connoted at least two beliefs concerning which Christendom has ceased to be agreed. The Mass was not merely a communion-service in commemoration of the Lord's death ; it was also the crowning mystery of faith, wherein "the Word made flesh," by the

miracle of Transubstantiation, was daily offered up as an ineffable sacrifice for the dead and for the living. Holding fast to so tremendous an article of faith, it was natural that the mediæval Church should build her altars of marble and that she should surround with sweet flowers and twinkling lights and lingering incense the golden tabernacle which was to her "the place where the Lord lay." And it was inevitable that music should claim a place amid all this pomp and circumstance.

Although the music at High Mass flows on almost unbrokenly from the beginning to the end of the celebration, comparatively few of the sacred words are sung.¹ The celebrant at the altar reads the various prayers rapidly, and the worshippers in the nave follow him silently in their books of devotion, while the choir protracts the few sung portions. To be precise, the choir sings only the three Greek words in the

¹ Throughout the above paragraph, only the "Ordinary" of the Mass is referred to, i.e. the part of the Mass which is the same every day. The "Proper" of any given day's Mass consists of prayers and lessons "proper" to some particular feast. In the larger churches, the choir sings part of the "Proper," but always to plain-chant. From a composer's point of view, a Mass contains only the sung portions of the "Ordinary."

Kyrie eleison; the hymn *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*; the Creed; the five short sentences of *Sanctus* and *Benedictus*; the three sentences of *Agnus Dei*; and a few Amens and responses. When a composer is said to have "written a Mass," all that is meant is that he has set to music a libretto containing the six numbers just mentioned.¹ It follows that his treatment of the text must be broad. For example, his *Benedictus* ought to continue while the celebrant is saying all the five prayers which divide the Consecration from the Pater Noster; and yet the *Benedictus* contains only nine Latin words.

It seems to have been in the Cathedral of Tournai, the church whose towers still look down upon the lazy Scheldt, that a musician's mass first took the place of the ancient chant for the rendering of the sung portions of the eucharistic service. This was in the thirteenth century. The fashion spread; and, as was stated in the preceding chapter on Orlandus Lassus, by the fifteenth century the masses of certain com-

¹ Many masses by well-known composers contain five numbers only. The Creed does not form part of every day's celebration of Mass, and accordingly it is absent from certain musical settings.

posers were being sung all over western Christendom.

Following an admirable custom, the early mass-writers used to build the whole of a mass, from *Kyrie eleison* to *Agnus Dei*, upon the same melody or theme, thus obtaining a dignity and unity of effect in praiseworthy contrast with the too tuneful and restless masses so recently condemned by Pius X. This theme or melody was not invented by the composer himself, but was taken from the rich treasury of the plain-chant. In certain cases this was an eminently devotional course to follow. Take, for example, the melody of the old plain-song hymn to the Holy Ghost, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, which hymn is familiar nowadays to all denominations of Christians. By making this melody, associated as it was in everybody's mind with Whit-Sunday, the basis of his mass of the feast of Pentecost a composer was able to write music which helped the hearer to enter more deeply into the spirit of the feast instead of distracting his thoughts from it.¹

¹ Wagner in his *Kaisermarsch* strengthened his appeal to German hearts by using the theme of *Ein' feste Burg*. Schumann, at the end of *The Two Grenadiers*, put the hearer in touch with Republican and Imperial memories by employing *La Marseillaise*. A Mass based on *Assumpta est Maria*, if sung on the Feast of the Assumption, would have a similar effect.

So far all was well. But composers soon wearied of using the same themes over and over again, and accordingly they turned for inspiration from the church to the world. For the *canto fermo* or prevailing melody of his new mass a composer would boldly adopt the tune of some secular song. Innumerable masses, for example, were constructed on the fine theme of a popular air called *The Armed Man*. Within decent limits there was nothing very dreadful about this new departure. Four or five hundred years ago the line between sacred and secular things was not always strongly drawn. The little houses clustered snugly round the soaring churches, and the pains and pleasures and tasks of the people were all blent with their religion. In Latin countries, even at the present day, no one sees harm in practices which shock Anglo-Saxons as irreverent. For instance, a poor gardener's wife thinks it no sacrilege to clatter with her baskets into the ever-open church on a market-day morning to pray for good trade. No grave scandal was involved, therefore, in the use of secular melodies for ecclesiastical purposes so long as the melodies were in themselves decorous and the music

made from them was reverent and edifying.¹ Unhappily, however, composers did not know where to stop. A few of them, unrestrained by piety or good taste, shamelessly seized upon popular airs which were associated with flippant or even lewd words. Worst of all, some of the singers, through force of habit or indolence or downright perversity, sometimes sang the profane words of the secular songs instead of the sacred texts of the divine liturgy. This, without doubt, was the most glaring of the evils with which the Sacred Council of Trent was confronted when it addressed itself to the question of church-music.²

The second evil to which the Council bent its mind was less painful and scandalous, but was still very great. Even if the Latin words of the

¹ The borrowing of the world's music by the Church has not been confined to the ages before Palestrina. On the homely principle of "not letting the Devil have all the best tunes," religious reformers have often proceeded in this way. The official "tune-book" of one of the largest religious bodies in Great Britain up to three years ago contained many secular airs, including psalm-tunes adapted from Beethoven's Sonatas and also the familiar music to *Drink to me only with thine eyes*.

² Deplorable as was this scandal, its extent has been much exaggerated. The secular melodies used by the mass-composers generally received a musical treatment which made them unrecognizable by the congregation. Again, some of the songs were not widely known. It is impossible, for instance, to trace the words of *The Armed Man*, although its melody was more used than any other by mass-writers.

Missal and the ancient melodies of the Gradual and Antiphoner had been punctiliously retained, a great deal of the current church-music would still have been objectionable because it was not imbued with the spirit of Christianity. Instead of simplicity, earnestness, tenderness, it was marked by complexity, affectation, hardness. Like sundry choirmasters of our own day, too many of the sixteenth-century chapel-masters assumed that religion was made for church-music and not church music for religion. To their minds the Christian year, with its changing phases of solemnity and ecstasy, was merely a string of occasions for musical display. Music ceased to be the means and became the end of their churchmanship. And whenever music or any other art becomes self-contained it turns sour. It was so in the century of Palestrina. The musicians made music for one another instead of for men and women at large. Their works, including their settings of the Mass, abounded in elaborate devices which only the initiated could understand.¹ Indeed, so jealous and contemptuous

¹ As far back as 1322 Pope John XXII, in spite of his eighty-two years, issued a vigorous decree from Avignon denouncing the beginnings of these

of outsiders did the musicians become that some of them prepared their MSS. in such a way as to make them unintelligible save to readers who had the key to the riddle. For instance, there was a MS. inscribed *Respice me, ostende mihi faciem tuam* ("Behold me, shew me thy face"), which meant that the singers were to face one another holding opposite edges of the paper, one half of the music having been written upside down. Other works were so constructed as to be sung both backwards and forwards.¹ Again, there was music in notes of different colours, each colour conveying a meaning. And there was music written like certain poems of George Herbert and his contemporaries, in the shapes of altars, rainbows, and crosses. The ingenuity and patience lavished on these productions were stupendous; but their heartless and tedious

abuses. He complained that "through the multitude of the notes . . . the seemly ascents and temperate descents of the plain-chant are obscured"; that the voices "run hither and thither intoxicating the ear . . . whereby desirable devotion is contemned and deplorable wantonness increased." He also emphasized the evil effects of irreligious church-music on the minds of the singers.

¹ The incredulous reader may as well be told that the music-sellers still keep in stock a pianoforte-piece by Moscheles, called *The Way of the World*, which can be played either downside up or upside down.

cleverness made them obstacles rather than aids to Christian devotion. Indeed, devotion was so far from the singers' thoughts that some of them never sang any words at all, but merely vocalized their parts upon a single vowel-sound, as if they were singing instrumental music. And, while thus undevotionally employed, sundry empty-pated choirmen were wont to throw themselves into the ostentatious postures with which long-haired charlatans delight foolish audiences in the concert-halls of our own day.

After what has been said in the chapter on Orlandus Lassus, of course the reader will understand that not all the mass music and choirs were thus unprofitable or scandalous. The libraries of the greater churches contained many masses, which were reverential as well as ingenious, and hundreds of choristers were earnest men. But the proportion of dry or inscrutable or indecorous works was far too great, and the army of unspiritual choirmen was too well recruited. Even Lassus and Palestrina themselves had written masses in the Netherlander style which deserved strong

reproof, and many of the singers who sang them made bad worse.

At a full sitting of the Sacred Council of Trent in 1562, as portrayed by the brush of Titian in the painting reproduced on the following leaf, the disorderly state of ecclesiastical music was solemnly considered. According to some writers the reverend councillors were anxious to banish from the churches all music save the plain-chant. This is false.¹ To recoil into Puritan extremes was not the Church's way. The Church had no more intention of stifling music than of burning the altar-pieces of Raphael and replacing them by flatly-painted works in the archaic style of the Catacombs. She aimed not at Music's death, but at Music's health and strength and beauty. Above all, the Council was determined to lead church-music into her proper place as the handmaid of religion rather than as religion's spoilt and turbulent child.

The Council naturally began by forbidding

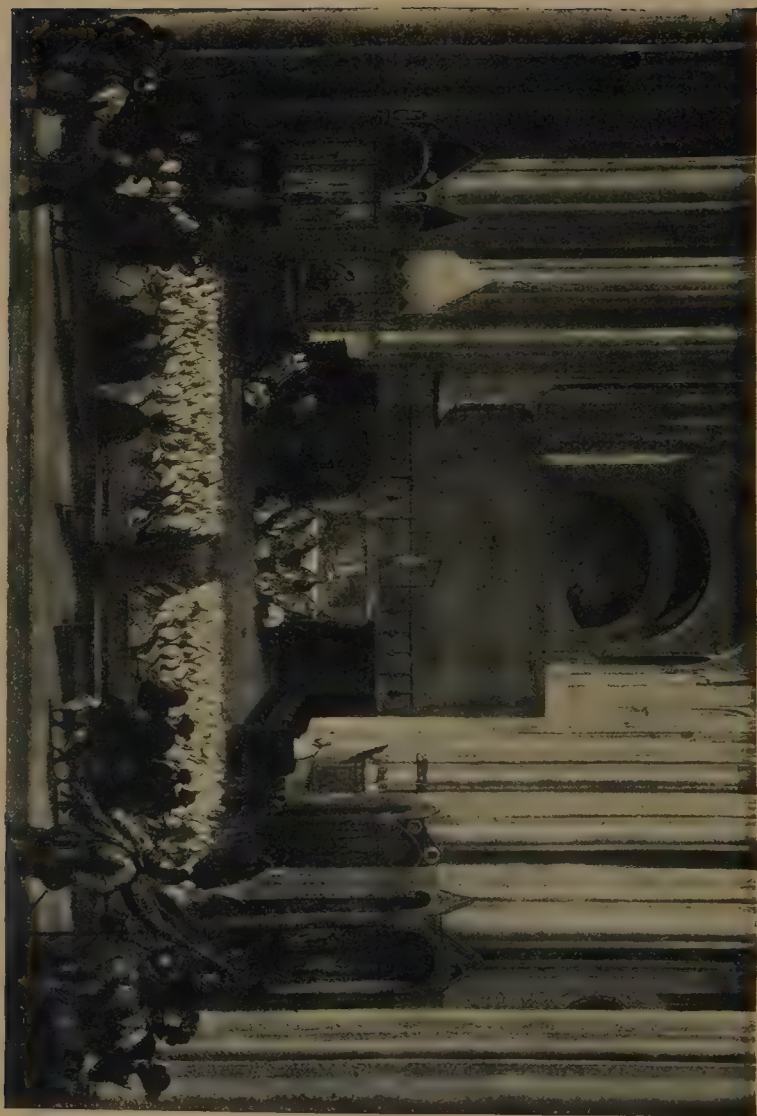
¹ The language of the Council in its twenty-second session is conclusive on this point. The Council did not mention polyphony, but simply condemned organ music and sung music mixed with impure elements, as well as unbecoming actions on the part of the singers.

the admixture of mundane elements with the Church's holy song. So far the task was simple. But the reform of music on its technical side was a thornier problem. The Fathers were persuaded that the elaborate masses of the Netherlander school were doing more harm than good ; but they were bishops, not chapel-masters, and their difficulty was to find a new musical language in which devotion might be more warmly and simply, and yet grandly expressed. In short, they had to bring the church musicians into line with the church architects and the church painters.

In 1564, Pius IV named a commission of eight cardinals, and charged them with the duty of carrying the Council's will into effect. At least two of the eight, Cardinals Vitellozzo Vitellozzi and Carlo Borromeo, were musicians.

So far it is a plain tale. But when we come to the question of Palestrina's connexion with the affair, we are brought to a perplexed halt between romancing on one side and excessive scepticism on the other.

Eighty years ago a priest, Giuseppe Baini by



THE SACRED COUNCIL OF TRENT.

After Titian.

name, published in Rome two quarto volumes of four hundred pages each devoted to Palestrina. The work had a European success. Victor Hugo, on the strength of it, penned his famous and foolish lines apostrophizing Palestrina as "the father of harmony." Taine revelled in it uncritically and reprinted its wildest anecdotes. Thirty years ago a reaction began which has been carried too far, and to-day Baini is often set aside in forgetfulness of his many merits and of the fact that he lived a hundred years nearer than ourselves to the fountain-heads of tradition.

According to the story as Baini tells it, their Eminences turned to Palestrina and besought him to attempt a mass in which the sacred words should be clearly heard throughout, in union with polyphonic music which all might understand. Palestrina felt the heaviness of his responsibility. Face to face with issues so vast he did not dare to risk failure with a single mass. He composed thrée, labouring at them prayerfully, lovingly, humbly. On the first he wrote *Illumina oculos meos*, "Enlighten Thou my eyes." The third he inscribed with

the revered name of his dead patron, Pope Marcellus.¹

Baini's account boldly goes on to declare that on the last Sunday in April, 1565, the eight cardinals of the commission assembled at the house of Cardinal Vitellozzi to hear the three masses sung. From the first notes to the last the whole performance stirred the commissioners deeply ; but it was the *Mass of Pope Marcellus* which brought them to their feet in joy and wonder. Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, the Pope's nephew, reported to Pius that the work was an inspired production, and beyond the unaided powers of a mere human being, however talented he might be : and this

¹ Marcellus II (Cervino), whose pontificate lasted only twenty-three days, has been mentioned several times in this chapter. As an example of the wild ignorance with which the music of the sixteenth century used to be discussed, it may be noted that Pellegrini denied Palestrina's authorship of the *Mass of Pope Marcellus*, declaring that Palestrina had merely worked up a Mass written by Pope Marcellus I. As Marcellus I died twelve centuries before Palestrina was born, and even before the rudimentary musical labours of St. Ambrose, Pellegrini might just as well have said that the present cathedral of Chartres was built by the Druids who had a shrine on the same spot. Nor is Pellegrini alone in blundering about Marcellus. In a sumptuous volume of musical biographies published two years ago, there is a full-page plate with the legend, "Palestrina repeating before Marcellus II the Mass by which he demonstrated that Polyphony could be the vehicle of Religious Emotion. A.D. 1564." The picture shows Palestrina playing on an organ, although the organ would have been fatal to his design. Marcellus II died in 1555.

cardinal, known to us to-day as St. Charles Borromeo, was not a man to talk loosely or insincerely. Pius IV, after hearing the mass in public, was unmeasured in his praise. Giovanni Parvi, the copyist who transcribed the three masses for the Sistine Chapel, wrote out the *Marcellus* in characters of unusual size and beauty to show his reverence for so divine a composition. On all hands it was agreed that the model for the music of the mass had indeed been found, and many saw in the composer the direct instrument of Providence, "the amanuensis of God."

Thus Bains.

In retort, Bains's modern critics have hurled more contempt at the Three Masses of Palestrina than was ever hurled at the Three Days of Christopher Columbus; and on some points they are certainly entitled to make merry. For example, the words *Illumina oculos meos* were not Pierluigi's prayer for light, but simply the name of a motet from which he drew the theme of his mass. Again, the *Mass of Pope Marcellus* had been written years before the Council of Trent discussed church music. Worst of all, the records of the proceedings at the house of

Cardinal Vitellozzi do not state what masses were sung, and do not mention the name of Palestrina at all.

The present writer holds no brief for Bainsi, whose literary methods are often irritating beyond endurance. Yet there is something to be said in his defence. For fifty years the learned differed from Bainsi over the year of Pierluigi's birth ; yet Bainsi was proved to be nearly right. Because we have no documents to the effect that Cardinal Vitellozzi heard three masses by Palestrina on the memorable Sunday of 1565, it does not follow that no evidence on the point existed in Bainsi's day, before the slackness of United Italy had allowed innumerable treasures of the Roman libraries, including an autograph of Christopher Columbus, to be sold to grocers for wrapping up butter. In the absence of documents, the details of Bainsi's narrative strain the faith of modern readers very sorely. And yet, when one is about to throw Bainsi aside, a still greater puzzle confronts one. How did Bainsi's tale originate ? He was not the kind of man to concoct a deliberate fable and coolly to foist it upon the world. It must always be remembered

that Baini was one of Palestrina's successors as director of the chapel of the Vatican basilica, and that he must have been familiar both with its traditions and with many entries in its archives which he did not transcribe in his often ridiculous notes.

The writer has found it worth his while to try and reconstitute the events of April, 1565. At that date Palestrina was not a member of the pontifical chapel. He was working at St. Mary Major ; and there are superabundant proofs that the pontifical singers still regarded him with jealousy and dislike. Their "punctator," or secretary, was a Spaniard, Cristofano de Hoyeda, whose recording of a protest against Palestrina's admission to the choir has already been mentioned. Having made such an entry in his minute-book, it is easy to understand that this Spanish punctator would not go out of his way to neutralize it by a further entry in Palestrina's favour.

From the fact that the punctator's entry for Sunday, 28 April, 1565, merely states that the choir sang "some masses" at the palace of Cardinal Vitelli, Baini's modern detractors seem

to draw the conclusion that these masses were not Palestrina's. But if they were not Palestrina's, whose were they? Had they been the works of some actual members of the pontifical chapel, the greatly honoured composer would have seen to it that his brother the punctator duly chronicled his name. In this case the argument from silence tells in Palestrina's and Baini's favour.

But there is a stronger argument. Any one who knows the traditional thoroughness with which the Cardinals in Rome do their work will smile at the suggestion that their Eminences of the commission simply sent for two dozen cosmopolitan, self-seeking musicians and meekly listened to such masses as the singers chose to sing. Musicians themselves, the Cardinals would certainly decide what music was to be performed. And, as St. Carlo Borromeo was Pierluigi's friend, what composer would more naturally recur to his mind than Palestrina, the high-principled musician who had been honoured by Pope after Pope for fourteen years? Those who imagine that there was a composer in Rome more obviously worthy of the Cardinals' choice



THE FAMILY OF BASSANO.
After Jacopo Bassano.

than Palestrina will perhaps divulge his name and point out the whereabouts of his compositions.

The probability is that Palestrina was indeed asked to provide the Cardinals with three masses for the purposes of their experiment, and that Baini's romancing is confined to his notion that Palestrina wrote three new masses instead of selecting three which he had already written. There was almost as much need for Palestrina to show an earnest and responsible spirit in selecting old masses as in writing new ones ; and, when one bears in mind the subsequent history of the *Mass of Pope Marcellus*, one is fairly entitled to demand : If Baini's tale be all untrue, what was it that happened ?

It was not so much in the form as in the matter and spirit that the *Mass of Pope Marcellus* differed from the works of the greater Netherlanders. Technically, Palestrina was not a remarkable innovator. His glorious achievement was his taking up of the existing polyphonic mass-forms, his pruning away of their unseemly ornaments, his emptying out of their ostentation and his filling them full with Christian feeling.

As for the point on which, according to the punctator Cristofano de Hoyeda, the Cardinals were most anxious—that is to say, the intelligibility of the sacred words—the *Mass of Pope Marcellus* has not been overpraised for its soundness in this respect.

The term “polyphonic” describes the music in which several melodies are so woven together as to produce a rich effect of diversity in unity. In “harmonic” music the separate parts are usually ugly or meaningless when they are sung one by one; but in a fine polyphonic composition each one of the five or six or more voices has something beautiful to say on its own account. In writing such music the difficulty is to make the particular beauties of the separate parts coalesce into a general beauty of the whole music instead of clashing and jangling. In its perfection, polyphony is the ideal means of expression on the grander occasions of Christian worship. By reason of the independence of its component melodies it is not bound by the strong and regular rhythm of our “barred” harmonic music. Indeed, by causing the accents of the parts to fall at different points

it so distributes them as to suppress the effect of rhythm altogether, thus excluding the restlessness of space and time and filling the soul with the sense of eternity. Yet the eternity to which it testifies is not a void or a negation ; it is a full sea rich with lights and murmurs. At other times polyphonic music suggests by its diversity in unity the ideal state of the Church in which multitudes of bright and strong personalities are suppressing their selfishness and dwelling together in love with one heart and with one mind.

The best of Palestrina's forerunners were almost (but not quite) his equals in the mere skill with which they plaited together the strands of the polyphony. But where they plaited hemp and straw, Palestrina intercoiled silk and fine linen and threads of silver and gold. In other words, his parts were not dry sequences of sounds, but melodies of gracious and spiritual beauty. To a trained musician his finest works are marvels. The separate melodies move so largely that one can hardly believe they are subordinate to a still larger general pattern, and yet the pattern of the whole is bold and clear. The parts are as distinctive as the colours of the rain-

bow ; yet the whole falls as freely and naturally as a sunbeam. Palestrina's works abound in passages which, by their sheer musicianship, place him shoulder to shoulder with the greatest composers of whom we have knowledge. The world has known artists as great, but none greater. He was the equal of Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner ; of Bramante, Raphael, Michael Angelo.

What would have happened if Palestrina's masses had failed to convince the Cardinals nobody knows. But the Church had become so dissatisfied with the bulk of polyphonic masses that she would certainly have taken repressive measures of some kind. Pius and his councillors were not mere talkers, and it is probable that their legislation would have effectively muzzled polyphonic music at the very moment when it was approaching its artistic climax. Throughout three hundred blundering years composers had been labouring to make such music as Palestrina's possible. The "Nuove Musiche" was already in the air, and if the Pope and cardinals had silenced such men as Palestrina and Vittoria, instead of inflaming them to utter

the best that was within them, polyphonic music would survive to-day only as a curiosity for musical antiquaries. Without Palestrina's success we should look back upon it as a truncated pyramid. But Palestrina did not fail, and polyphonic music rises up through the mists of the centuries as a goodly tower full-built. Like the western towers of the greatest of French cathedrals, its basement is rude, and its stories as high as the nave roof are bald and stiff, and some of its ornaments are misplaced and grotesque. But its final rush into the blue is altogether glorious, and its golden cross is as radiant as a lark singing ever so high in heaven.

It must be understood that the concerted music which has just been discussed was only supplementary to the plain-chant. At every high celebration of Mass the two musics were heard alternately—the plain-chant in the “Proper” of the Mass and the polyphonic music in the “Ordinary.”¹ Outside the Mass there were

¹ See the foot-note on page 89. The texts “proper” to each feast are generally taken from the Holy Scriptures. For example, the Introit sung at the beginning of the third Mass on Christmas Day is *Puer natus est nobis*, “Unto us a Son is born.”

also the other divine offices with their "Proper." The number of "Proper" texts sung during the liturgical year ran into many hundreds, and the plain-chant musical settings were equally abundant. These plain-chant settings had been accumulating throughout a period of a thousand years before the meeting of the Sacred Council of Trent, and it would have been hard to find two ecclesiastical provinces or even two dioceses in which the MS. versions entirely agreed. Accordingly, in 1576, Gregory XIII set about a work which well became a pope who had chosen a name recalling the traditional foster-father of plain-chant, St. Gregory the First and the Great. He charged Palestrina and a brother composer, Antonio Zoilo, with the revision of the Graduale and the Antiphonarium.

Fortunately, however, Palestrina did not lay his composer's quill aside. The following eighteen years were the years which gave birth to some of the finest of his ninety-three masses—for instance, to the masses *Æterna Christi Munera*, *Dum Complerentur*, *Iste Confessor*, and *Assumpta est Maria*. They were also the years during which he wrote his most wonderful *Song*

of Solomon motets, his *Stabat Mater* (edited two hundred and fifty years later by Richard Wagner), and his *Lamentations*, which were composed at the request of Sixtus V. Amidst so much activity the revision of the plain-song was not completed. Igino, his one surviving son and a low-principled wastrel, basely hired a hack after his father's death to botch up a pretended completion of the work for which Igino exacted 2500 scudi; but the Vatican Chapter discovered the fraud. How far Palestrina's editorial work led to practical results is uncertainly known. Without the aid of a well-manned commission, whose duty it should have been to overhaul the choir-books of all Christendom, it was impossible for much to be done; but, on the other hand, it is hard to believe that the judgments and, better still, the intuitions of such a man should have borne upon the subject for years in vain. The whole affair of Palestrina's revision of the Graduale is beset, however, by perplexities almost as great as those which surround the story of his three masses. If we are to believe one of his contemporaries, the Spanish composer Fernand de Las Infantas, who memorialized

the Pope on the subject through Philip II, Palestrina laid irreverent hands upon the beautiful and ancient chant. Indeed, until a few years ago it was customary to saddle Palestrina with the doubtful honours of the unhappy Medicean edition of the Graduale (1614) which the Church only disowned under Leo XIII.

Enjoying emoluments equal to £500 a year at the present value of money, and united in second marriage with a rich widow, Victoria Dormuli, Palestrina lived the last fourteen years of his life in dignified ease. With the help of the Duke of Mantua and other patrons, he was able to publish work after work, and thus to challenge before the world the sumptuously printed masterpieces of Orlandus Lassus.

Palestrina's end came on 2 February, 1594. He died as he had lived, a fervent Christian and a devout churchman : and all Rome knew that the poor plate of lead upon his coffin spoke the truth with its two proud words : *MUSICAE PRINCEPS*—"Prince of Music."

MONTEVERDE

IN the year darkened by Palestrina's death, a company of dilettanti assembled in the house of one Corsi, at Florence, in order to assist at the first performance of a work called *Daphne*. Both its libretto, by Rinuccini, and its music, by Giacompo Peri, have disappeared; but *Daphne* remains famous as the first opera ever written.

It was fitting that the city of Florence should be the birthplace of the new movement in art which brought *Daphne* into existence. As a centre of ecclesiastical music Florence had never been remarkable, and there were no deeply rooted and grandly grown local traditions encumbering the ground. Again, Florence was the headquarters of the Renaissance. In no other city had the mania for the art and literature of ancient Greece so completely possessed men's minds. The "New Music," of which *Daphne* was the first clean-cut example, was not a deliberate in-

novation. It was accidentally discovered in the course of a fruitless search for the Old Music of the classical Greek theatre.

Giovanni Bardi, Count of Vernio, was the moving spirit of the so-called Academy of eager Florentines to which Rinuccini and Peri belonged. Bardi, who was himself a poet and something of a composer, had been appointed to a post which gave him the direction of the ducal festivities and entertainments, and he did not neglect his opportunities of working for the all-round triumph of the classical revival. Mediævalism had already been cast out of literature, architecture, and painting; and Bardi and his friends yearned to cast it out of music also. Whatever may be said to the contrary, the polyphonic masterpieces which Bardi found in possession of the field belong in spirit to the Middle Ages and only in date to the Renaissance.¹ If the polyphonic method had been confined to church music, probably Bardi would have made no complaint. But the method dominated nearly

¹ This belated arrival of the full-developed mediæval music, many generations after the consummation of mediæval architecture, was partly explained in the first chapter of the present volume.

all music, excepting certain instrumental compositions, and the songs and dances of the common people.

The grievance came to a head one day in Venice, whither the patricians of Florence had repaired for the marriage of their Duke, Francesco I, with the lovely Venetian, Bianca Capello, in 1579. Throughout the glittering festivities everything went bravely except the music. A happily-chosen poet had penned some deft verses in praise of the beauty of the bride ; but they were smothered to death under the portentous music of Andrea Gabrieli and Claudio Merullo. Yet Gabrieli was no dry pedant, but a genuine musician. For secular purposes the methods, not the men, were to blame. Count Bardi, however, did not hesitate to denounce the method and the practitioners too. He had listened to the performance about as patiently as the sinful Tannhäuser listened to the excellent Wolfram's blameless discourse on love. But, like Tannhäuser, Bardi and his friends could not stop short at abusing others' performances. They seized their harps, burning to show how the thing ought to be done.

Filled as they were with an unreasoning passion for antiquity, these academicians of Florence jumped to the conclusion that the problem would be solved by a revival of the Greek tragic drama, ancient music and all. But where was the ancient music to be found? A little inquiry showed that it was either lost or embedded in the Church's heritage of plain-chant. Disappointed, but not daunted, they turned to Florentine musicians to make the deficiency good. Music was supplied and a Greek play was performed ; but even the youngest and most fervid academicians could not blind themselves to its utter failure.

In spite of this fiasco, Bardi persisted in his quest for a new musical language which should express the poignant emotions of tragic drama as adequately as the idiom of Palestrina expressed the high and holy wonder of Christian worship. The Academy soon perceived that, as drama is concerned with the clash and interplay of human individuals, the first step was to write music for a single singer instead of for a number of voices combining to execute five or six "parts." To modern readers such a reform seems too obvious

for discussion ; but, like every other notable advance in the history of music, this stride forward was not taken without delays and doubts and fears. It was Vincenzo Galilei, the father of the astronomer, and himself a lutenist and a composer, as well as a man of letters and a mathematician, who led the way. On a date which cannot be ascertained, somewhere in the fifteen-eighties, Galilei publicly sang a monody of his own composition, "to the accompaniment of a viol." The work was a setting of the scene of Ugolino in the *Inferno* of Dante. It is recorded that some of the hearers laughed. But others applauded ; and Galilei soon came forward again with a monodic setting of the lamentations of Jeremiah. Other experiments followed. And, in 1594, came *Daphne*, in which not one but several performers assumed dramatic rôles and sang their speeches throughout to an instrumental accompaniment.

From all the indications, *Daphne* was a weak and fumbling experiment falteringly made in a private house. Yet *Daphne* was big with the future of modern music. Though powerless to submerge the noble monuments which Palestrina

and his school had built so high and strong, the "New Music" was destined to turn the whole flood of musical activity into an unsuspected channel. *Daphne* was the death-warrant of polyphony as a method for future composers. And *Daphne* was born in the year when Palestrina died.

The polyphonists did not consent to be deposed without a sharp and spirited struggle. They boldly took the offensive and came out of church into the full front of the monodists' position. Their chief fighting-man, Orazzi Vecchi, set himself to prove that the unaccompanied polyphonic method could be used not only for motets and madrigals, but even for a comic opera. Accordingly he published *Anfiparnasso*, a work so odd that some good critics refuse to take it seriously and regard it as a screaming parody upon the New Music. In *Anfiparnasso* five singers keep on singing in the madrigal style. Whenever the dramatic action requires that only one character shall be on the stage soliloquizing, the claims of polyphony are met by making one singer sing in view of the audience while the other four sing out of sight.



ORPHEUS AND THE BEASTS.

From an Old Print.

While the two lovers are singing "on," the three other choristers are singing "off." In other words, a choral flow takes the place of an instrumental accompaniment—an essentially undramatic arrangement.

Six years after the production of *Daphne*, Giacompo Peri's hour struck. Henri IV of France was on his way to Florence for his nuptials with Marie de Médicis. The academicians rushed forward to seize the opportunity of gilding the New Music with the splendour of royal patronage. Rinuccini wrote a dramatic poem *Euridice*,¹ and Peri once more supplied dramatic music. This time, however, their efforts were not doomed to the seclusion of a private house. *Euridice* was performed on so grand a scale that, within a month, all the artists and courtiers of Europe were discussing it. Peri himself sang the music allotted to Orpheus; Francesca, the daughter of Peri's brother-musician Caccini, was Euridice, and

¹ The operatic settings of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice are innumerable. Among the painters and engravers, as well as among the musicians of the classical revival, this story was an unfailing favourite. Two old Orpheus prints of musical interest are reproduced facing pages 118 and 122.

some of the proudest noblemen and noblewomen of Tuscany completed the cast. The little opera was a success: and thus gushed fairly into the sunlight the spring of musical activity which was to broaden at last into the brimming and sounding flood of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

There is no instrumental overture to *Euridice*. The piece begins with a prologue declaimed to a simple melody by a singer representing the Tragic Muse, with very short instrumental *ritornelli* dividing the seven verses. The orchestra consisted of a chitarrone (a great lute), a lira grande, a liuto grosso, and a gravicembalo. The gravicembalo was a keyed instrument (a remote ancestor of the pianoforte), and on this occasion it was played by Corsi. The Tragic Muse having retired, some shepherds appear and carry on a conversation by means of recitatives and extremely brief and bald choruses. Euridice and Orpheus come on but soon go off again, leaving the shepherd Thyrsis to make a few remarks and to execute a long composition upon a triple flute. At length Daphne breaks in with the news that a venomous serpent has bitten

Euridice and that she is dead. The shepherds lament, and Act I is at an end.

Act II shows Orpheus in the infernal regions, pleading with Venus, with Pluto, with Proserpine, with Charon, and with Rhadamanthus that Euridice may be given back to his arms. Almost all this scene is recitative. In the last scene of all, Orpheus returns to Thyrsis and the other shepherds; and some short choral passages and dances bring the opera to a close. After their onslaughts on Gabrieli and Merullo for the unjoyfulness of their wedding music at Venice, no doubt the academicians felt bound to give *Euridice* a happy ending.

Apart from its historical interest, *Euridice* is musically worthless. In his preface to the score, printed at Venice, Peri laid down some sound principles of operatic composition. He declared that the unemotional parts of the dialogue ought to be recited to a sustained accompaniment in a manner which should be half song, half speech. He added that the more impassioned utterances required quicker and more strongly marked melodies with more abundant changes in the supporting harmony. Unfortunately, however, when one

turns to the work itself one finds that *Euridice* is almost barren of melodic beauty and dramatic force. In short, Peri opened the door and showed others the way ; but he himself stumbled on the threshold.

Imitations of *Euridice*, both bad and indifferent, sprang up like mushrooms. Caccini, Peri's friend, printed a musical version of the same *Euridice* poem which was never performed in public. All over northern Italy the poets and composers were busy. In Rome opera made its way more slowly : for, according to Pietro della Valle (who recorded the event in 1640), "lyric drama made its first appearance in Rome during the Carnival of 1606 upon a cart." The cart was roomy enough to hold a small stage and an orchestra. With Pietro della Valle as stage-manager, the players performed an opera by Paolo Quagliati, to the high delight of the Roman people, who followed the cart about the streets from four in the afternoon till midnight.

Meanwhile, the man who was to make the fortune of the New Music was living obscurely at Mantua as a viol player in the ducal band. His



ORPHEUS BEFORE PLUTO.

From an Old Print.

name was Claudio Monteverde. Born at Cremona in 1568, he had migrated to Mantua at an early age. His tutor in counterpoint was Ingegneri, chapel-master to the Duke of Mantua.¹ For the earnest Ingegneri's sake, it is warmly to be hoped that he had no other pupil like young Claudio. The lad could not be induced to receive the traditions of counterpoint with becoming reverence. Instead of accepting the contrapuntal rules as if they were laws of the Medes and Persians, he embraced the now familiar doctrine that what sounds right cannot be wrong. If counterpoint did not agree with Claudio Monteverde, so much the worse for counterpoint. Nor was this an empty outburst of youthful iconoclasm. At the age of sixteen he published, at Venice, a book of *Canzonette a tre voci*, in which orthodox counterpoint was repeatedly defied. His elders bewailed this youthful indiscretion, and patiently awaited the prodigal's return. But he remained impenitent. Fifteen years after the

¹ For generations Ingegneri was little more than a name. But it has been discovered recently that he was the author of certain fine compositions which had been published as "doubtful" in an appendix to the works of Palestrina. Some of these compositions were added, under Ingegneri's name, to the repertory of Westminster Cathedral in 1907.

Canzonette, at the responsible age of thirty-one, he launched from the press his fifth book of madrigals, in which he broke definitely away from the past. It is important to note that this was in 1599, a year before the production of Peri's *Euridice*. Peri had the luck to write the first opera ; but Monteverde was the true pioneer of the New Music.¹

The contrapuntists took up Monteverde's challenge. There has always been plenty of printers' ink in Venice, and both sides discharged pamphlets at the heads of their opponents. Monteverde replied with spirit to his foes ; and so far was the Duke of Mantua from feeling ashamed of his turbulent viol-player, that in 1603 he appointed him chapel-master in succession to Ingegneri. Four years later the betrothal of the Duke's son to the Infanta of Savoy gave Monteverde his chance of rivalling the opera which Peri had composed for the royal wedding at Florence. Rinuccini, the poet who had written the libretti of Peri's *Dafne* and *Euridice*, was called upon to

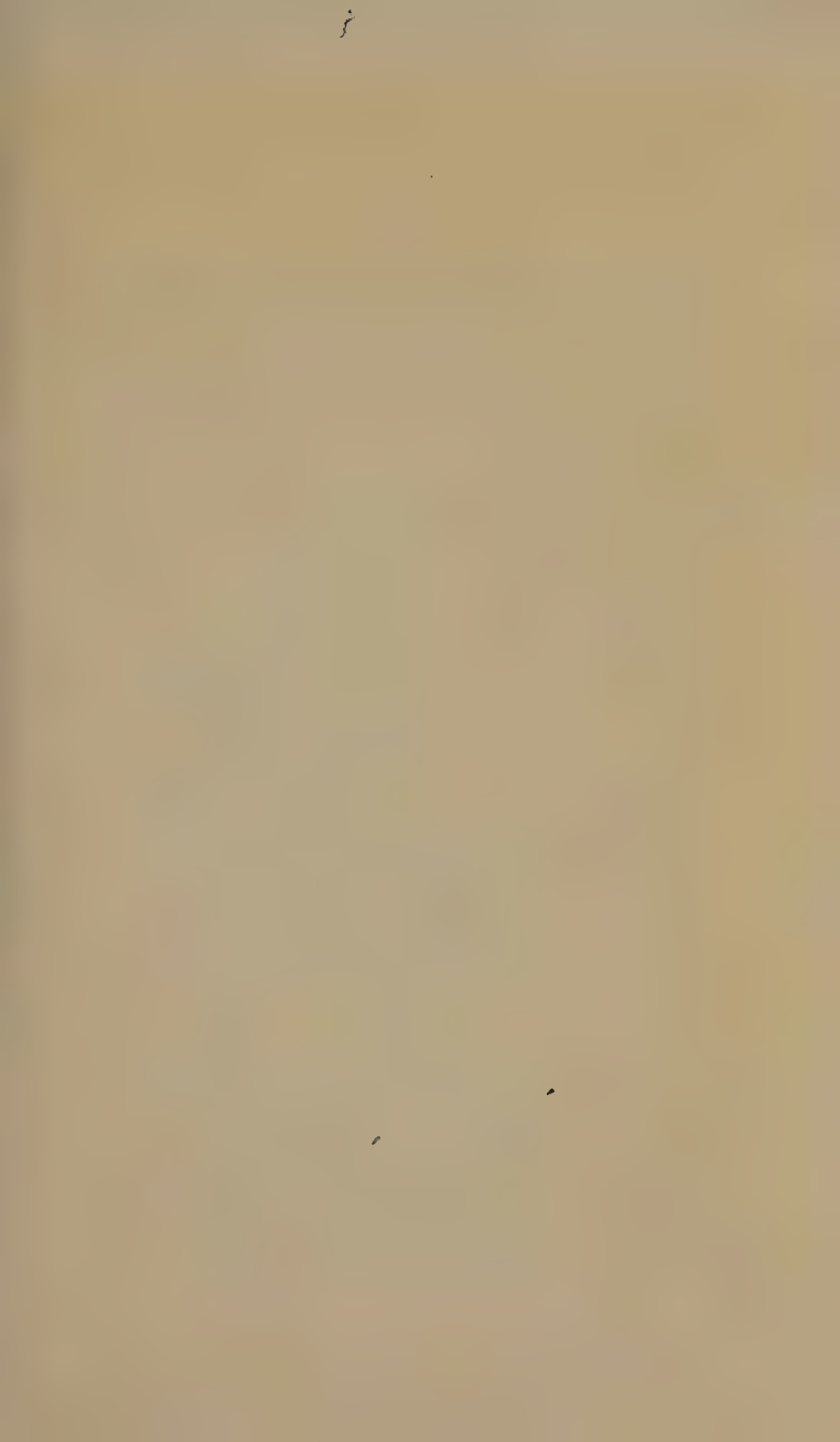
¹ In the history of harmony Monteverde holds a striking place. He was the first composer who used, habitually and of set purpose, unprepared discords. The consequences of this departure were of immense importance: but the matter is too technical for these pages.

provide Monteverde with a poetic drama. He responded with *Arianna*. Of Monteverde's music only one page has survived. This contains the forsaken Ariadne's lament which is said to have moved all who heard it to tears. The fragment contains only nineteen bars, but it is surcharged with intense feeling and abounds in musical novelties.

As if to force comparisons with the timid experiments of Peri, Monteverde quickly followed up *Arianna* with a Euridice opera called *Orfeo*. As *Orfeo* was printed at Venice in 1609, it can be studied as a whole ; and no musician is able to peruse its pages without amazement. From the stormy orchestral introduction to the closing duet for Apollo and Orpheus as they ascend to heaven, *Orfeo* is a book of wonders. It is true that most of the wonders are of the technical order, and that they are only apparent to readers who can contrast Monteverde's methods with those of his immediate forerunners ; but there are also many fine passages by which even general hearers would be pleased and stirred. ✓

Monteverde has been justly lauded for the skill and sound feeling with which he composed

music for the solo voice. But he deserves even warmer praise for his invention of the dramatic orchestra. Before Monteverde's *Arianna*, which was supported by thirty-six instrumentalists, orchestras were often equally large; but the stringed instruments were mainly such as were plucked with the fingers or with quills. With such instruments it was impossible to sustain sounds as they are sustained upon stringed instruments played with the bow. From an orchestra of quill-plucked strings one can only obtain a sum-total of sounds like a multitudinous pattering of raindrops or hailstones; while from the bow-played strings one can draw great sweeps of tone, rising and falling like a wind in pines, or like the chaunt of a waterfall, or like wailing or exulting human voices. Every modern opera-goer comes home with his ears full of the long-drawn passionate song of the violins, "yearning like a God in pain." And it was Monteverde who made the bow-played strings supreme in the dramatic orchestra. Again, it was Monteverde who took the first bold steps towards a discriminating use of the separate groups of instruments instead of thrumming the





TENIERS AND HIS FAMILY.

After Teniers the Younger.

whole orchestra like a big guitar from beginning to end of the performance without regard to dramatic fitness.

Orfeo was produced at the wedding of Francis Gonzaga with the Infanta of Savoy, along with Monteverde's *Ballo delle Ingrate*. It would be interesting to know what the Infanta's maids-of-honour thought of *Il Ballo delle Ingrate*, which was a musical "morality" in dispraise of flirts and coquettes. The punishments in store for heartless beauties were luridly portrayed upon the stage; and at the close of the action Venus, as Goddess of Love, and Pluto, as Lord of Hades, came forward and sang a solemn warning to the ladies present, declaring that although their loveliness must fade, the pains in punishment of their cruelty to faithful lovers would endure. Classical conceits and affectations of this order were so abundant in the libretti with which Monteverde had to deal, that the directness and sincerity of his music are doubly remarkable.

The scenic accessories of these performances were so expensive that opera was out of the question save at princely nuptials or on other

occasions of lavish rejoicing. This is the reason why sixteen years passed before Monteverde set to work upon his fourth opera. But the three operas already made public had done so much for his fame that, in 1613, Venice coaxed him away from Mantua by offering him the post of chapel-master of St. Mark's at a higher salary than had ever been paid before. At Venice the New Musician continued to scandalize the Old Musicians by publishing madrigals which must have made Ingegneri turn in his grave. Worse still, he inflicted a real disaster upon music by forcing his dramatic method into the sacred offices of the Church. A Requiem, which he composed in 1621, was the forerunner of the theatrical masses—"the shilling opera," as Pugin used to call them—which have so lately been forbidden after doing violence to religion for twelve generations.

Three years after the Requiem came another and bigger opera, *Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*. Modern playgoers who have heard neither of *Il Combattimento* nor of Claudio Monteverde will be surprised to hear that in this opera was originated a practice which has become

one of the stock tricks of the stage. When the manly Frank (wrongly accused by the wicked Jasper of the murder) takes his passionate farewell in the moonlight of the golden-haired, white-robed, clinging Muriel and confides to her the papers, a *tremolando* on the strings of the theatre band sharpens the poignancy of the moment. It is a common thing to hear people say that this device was borrowed from Wagner; but, like the practice of *pizzicato* (or plucking with the fingers at the strings of an instrument made for the bow), it descends straight from Monteverde.¹ *Il Combattimento* was followed by *Il Rosajo Fiorito*, *Proserpina Rapita*, a mass, and some miscellaneous music.

In 1633 Monteverde is said to have been ordained priest. But this event does not seem to have put a stop to his career as a composer for

¹ It may be objected that in modern melodrama the *tremolando* is played to the speaking voice of an actor, whereas in Monteverde's case it supported the voice of a singer. The truth is that the musical phrase for which Monteverde first used this accompaniment is less like song than excited speech.

Perhaps the reader ought to be reminded that the word "melodrama" has lost its proper meaning. A melodrama is not necessarily a gaudy and loud affair of an adventuress, a lost child, a hidden will, a murder and a comic Irishman. True melodrama is a form of music-drama; and something like it was in the minds of Bardi and his Academy in Florence.

the theatre. In 1639, despite his sacerdotal dignity and his seventy-one years, he came forward with an opera on the profane theme of *Adonis*, which delighted the Venetians so hugely that it ran until the Carnival of 1640 brought theatrical entertainments to an end.

The *Adonis* of Monteverde stands for much more than itself. Hitherto operas had been produced only under the patronage of princes or doges; but, in 1639, two professional musicians made the bold experiment of opening the first public opera-house in Europe. *Adonis* was accordingly the first music-drama written for the people at large. Very quickly a second Venetian opera-house opened its doors with a revival of *Arianna* and two new operas dealing with *The Marriage of Æneas and Lavinia* and *The Return of Ulysses*. All these are pagan subjects; but the Puritan movement which, at this time, was reaching its climax in England, had no counterpart in Venice. Besides, the priestly musician's face was saved by the fact that both the opera-houses of Venice bore the names of saints, the first being called San Cassiano and the second San Marco.

It has been too readily assumed that the rise of the impresario and the decay of the patron were to the advantage of operatic art. The change was inevitable; but it was not wholly salutary. On the face of it, the broadening of an art's basis by the substitution of democratic support for aristocratic patronage commends itself to modern ideas as all for the best. But the fact remains that opera has only prospered greatly under high and enlightened patrons, and that it has languished wherever it has been conducted on purely commercial lines. Nowhere are operatic conductors and singers more persistently petted and overpaid than in England and the United States of America; and yet England and the United States of America are the only two wealthy and progressive countries where opera has to be imported as a costly exotic because a native product hardly exists. To write operas for the pleasure of a prince or of some other individual employer is thought nowadays to smack of degrading servility; but history would show that the public has been quite as humiliating a taskmaster as the princely patron, while it has

been at the same time infinitely more inaccessible, fickle and inartistic.

The philanthropy of our English-speaking millionaires lacks variety. One or two of their enormous gifts for vague ends of "education" might very well be diverted to the refreshing and ennobling of men by means of grand opera, both grave and gay. Rich individuals, as well as cities and States, already give commissions to architects and painters; but how often does one hear of a rich man standing beside a composer of music-dramas with five thousand pounds? And yet, if his patronage were sufficiently intelligent, he would find that his money, like the money laid out by sagacious backers of young painters, was not lost, but so invested as to bring in dividends more tangible than gratitude and fame.

Following the example of Venice, the greater cities made haste to build public opera-houses throughout Italy. Cavalli, the successor of Monteverde, and other genuine musicians supplied innumerable new pieces; but the rank and file of opera-goers were not slow in requiring the composers to unbend and to spice the entertain-

ment with buffooneries. For example, in Cavalli's *Jason* there is a scene between Demo the stammerer and Orestes which was obviously introduced to humour the groundlings. The music is made to drag and halt while the unhappy Demo struggles with a word. The word will not come, and, disdaining Orestes' help, the stammerer stamps off, leaving Orestes to sing a soliloquy. But, in the midst of this soliloquy, Demo at last succeeds. Quite suddenly he thrusts in his head, sings the missing word, and promptly vanishes. As this identical trick keeps cropping up as one of the most excruciatingly odd "novelties" of the funny men at the pantomimes and music-halls, it is worth noting that two hundred and fifty years ago it was becoming a trifle stale.

While the public fostered buffoonery, both princes and public went on encouraging the excessive scenic display which has enfeebled opera just as a load of golden trappings jades a spirited horse. As in the case of Meyerbeer two hundred years later, any kind of flashy music would pass provided it was blared and pounded out in the midst of a gorgeous stage spectacle. To show

the lengths which Italians were eager to go in Monteverde's century, it is worth while detailing some of the supernumeraries and stage properties required for the performance of Freschi's *Berenice* at Padua. Berenice's gorgeous car was drawn by four horses ; and six other cars which figured in the spectacle had two horses each. There were also six chariots. In addition to the orchestra, there appeared on the stage six mounted trumpeters, six drummers, six players of sackbuts, six flautists, six cymbaleers, and twelve minstrels playing Turkish and other instruments. There were forty cornets on horseback, six ensigns, six pages, three sergeants, twelve huntsmen, twelve grooms, and twelve charioteers. Two lions were led by two Turks, and there were two led elephants. To fill up, there were a hundred virgins in white, a hundred soldiers, and a hundred horsemen in iron armour. The action of the piece also demanded "a forest filled with wild boar, deer, and bears."

To hold its own against such tumultuous and glittering pageantry as this, stage-music necessarily became showy and brazen. And, having once acquired a taste for pompous and theatrical

strains, the Italians quickly lost patience with the gravity and humility of the music of the Church. Made impudent by the cheap swiftness and vastness of their success, some of Bardi's Florentines soon began to call the works of Palestrina "barbarous," while Pietro della Valle (he of the perambulating cart) sneered at them as "antiquities only fit for a museum."

Monteverde died in 1643 (not in 1651 as is often stated), and was buried amidst general mourning in the Church of the Frari. In proportion to the threescore and fifteen years of his life, his musical remains, in print and in manuscript, are scanty. But his influence, for good and for evil, was enormous. He was like a king who, in order to fortify a newly-won province, tears down the dykes of his forefathers and abandons the rich and legendary lowlands to the waves. Had Monteverde merely banished the methods of Church music from the natural and innocent recreations of the World, his work would be entirely honourable. But he was not content with driving the Church's music out of the World. He forced the World's music into the Church as well. And yet one must not judge him harshly.

He was driven forward by forces stronger than himself, and he could not foresee the excesses of his Italian fellow-countrymen who, while they are the friends of petty or trashy tunes, are none the less the enemies of high music.

LULLY

WHILE everybody knows a good deal about Le Grand Monarque, few people out of France know much about La Grande Mademoiselle. Yet Louise d'Orléans, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, stands in the first rank of notable Frenchwomen. Of royal blood and possessed of enormous wealth in her own right, she fully expected to become the bride of the boy-king Louis XIV, although he was by fifteen years her junior. La Grande Mademoiselle was also a serious candidate for the hand of Charles II of England. But her wild audacities lifted her not upon a throne but upon the shelf. During the disturbances which attended Mazarin's regency, it was La Grande Mademoiselle who "captured" Orléans, taking it by escalade like an opera-bouffe Joan of Arc. Again, it was La Grande Mademoiselle who commanded in person the forts at Paris which fired on the royal troops under Turenne. No

wonder that Her Altitude came to be regarded nervously by Majesties in search of a bride.

Into the great household of this stormy lady, about the year 1645, there entered a twelve-year-old boy named Giambattista. He was the son of Lorenzo de' Lulli, an impecunious nobleman of Florence, and of Catarina del Serta his wife. While travelling through Tuscany, the Chevalier de Guise had been so much astonished by the lad's playing and singing that he bore him off to France as a treasure for Mademoiselle, who had expressed a wish for an Italian boy-musician. But Mademoiselle was either grossly forgetful or distinctly contemptuous of the Chevalier's musical judgment; for Giambattista—or Jean Baptiste de Lully, as he came to be called—was set to work not as a fiddler, but as a scullion in the kitchen.

Under an old Franciscan friar the boy had picked up sundry polite accomplishments, especially the playing of the guitar. He had also become an exceptional performer on the violin. After a time, Mademoiselle de Montpensier either discovered or remembered these facts, and was graciously pleased to raise her little scullion to a place in her private band. Unhappily, however,



Jean Baptiste Lully.
Sur-intendant de la Musique du Roy.

the new bandsman boasted poetical as well as musical gifts. In a sprightly poem, intended for private circulation only, he satirized Mademoiselle's foibles much too neatly.¹ Echoes of his verses reached the great lady's ears, and the poet was promptly sent about his business.

Outside the fact that he contrived to receive lessons in organ-playing and composition from highly reputable masters, we know little of Jean Baptiste's doings during the three or four years following his indiscretion. Probably he basked in the favour of a less magnificent but more serviceable patron. But, about 1651, he seems to have squeezed his way into the service of the King.² As a member of the string band called

¹ Lully's wit may be illustrated by his retort to the officer who came to him as the curtain was about to rise on the first performance of *Armide* with the words "The King is waiting." "The King is master here," said Lully, "and no one has the right to prevent him waiting as long as he pleases."

² A discreet disclosure by some favourite of the facts about Lully's poem may have helped to excite the interest of Louis in the young man. Certainly there was no love lost between Louis XIV and Mademoiselle de Montpensier, even before her military escapades had roused his anger. Mademoiselle's chagrin at her protracted spinsterhood (of which her proposal for a Society of Ladies "sans mariage et sans amour" was only one symptom) naturally involved resentment against Louis, who would neither marry her himself nor forward her marriage with another. But without some such explanation as this it is hard to account for the King's lavish patronage of the man who had lampooned the Princess.

"Les Violons du Roy" he distinguished himself so quickly that, in 1652, the King formed a second band, "Les petits Violons de Sa Majesté," with Lully as its chief. Thus, at the age of twenty, the scullion from Florence was firmly established in a position which, by such varied means as genius, cunning, industry, greed, ambition, and thoroughgoing unscrupulousness, he maintained until his dying day.

Louis XIV was devoted to the dance. Few things pleased him more than to take part in some stately masque or ballet. Two hundred years before the invention of music-drama by Bardi and his Florentines, the French Court had begun to enjoy entertainments called "Mascarades," wherein gorgeous stage-spectacle was relieved by song and dance. Under Louis XIII, himself a composer, the musical element in these masques had become important. For example, at the masquerade of *La Délivrance de Renault*, which was performed in 1617 with the King himself in the rôle of the Demon of the Fire, there was a choir of sixty-four singers backed up by an orchestra of thirty-eight lutes and viols. The Queen, Anne of Austria, vied with the

King in promoting such shows ; and during the Regency which followed the death of Louis, Anne and Cardinal Mazarin attempted to improve the mascarades into operas by bringing to Paris a company of Italian singers and players. But the Court, after hearing the Florentine operas, continued to prefer the native mascarades ; and one of the Court ladies has left behind her a plaintive record of a long, long Italian performance one Shrove Tuesday at the Palais Royal during which she nearly died of boredom and cold. Accordingly opera was languishing and ballet was flourishing when Louis XIV took the kingly power into his own hands.

The liking for the dance which the young ruler had inherited from his father became a passion ; and Lully satisfied it by pouring out a stream of chaconnes, sarabandes, giguees and courantes for daily performance, and also by fitting dance-music to the masques and other *divertissements* provided by the Court poets. Like Orlandus Lassus, whom he resembled in versatility and industry though, unhappily, not in soundness and kindness of heart, Lully advanced in his master's favour through a knack

of "making things go." Having composed music for a ballet or a ballet-comedy, he was equally able either to play one of the violins in the orchestra or to mount the stage as an actor and dancer. It is known, for instance, that he played the title-part in Molière's *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*.

But while Lully, who cared much less for music's progress than for his own, was merely pampering the dance-loving King, more earnest composers were steadily working in the cause of opera. These men believed that the Italian music-dramas were too heavy, and that Frenchmen, with their immemorial talent for bright rhythm and clear tune, were called to evolve a new kind of opera in which lyrical beauty and freedom should displace the sombreness and monotony of recitative. But they went about their work in a patriotic temper. Instead of taking up the Italian model provided by Monteverde and his disciple Cavalli and infusing into it a French spirit, they turned to their own native mascarades and tried to remodel them on dramatic lines.

The history of opera in Italy repeated itself to

some extent in France ; for the first performance of a French opera, properly so called, took place in a private house. In 1659, at Issy, near Paris, Monsieur de la Haye, the Farmer-General, invited the grand world to his country seat in order that they might assist at the “*première comédie française en musique représentée en France.*” The piece was a Pastoral, written by Pierre Perrin and set to music by Robert Cambert. Cambert was chapel-master and organist of Saint Honoré, Perrin was a priest, and Mazarin, one of the most active patrons of the new venture, was of course a Cardinal Prince of Holy Roman Church. French opera, therefore, was born in an odour of sanctity, and its churchly send-off opened a way even into the most jealously guarded hearts. By royal command, the Pastoral was repeated before their Majesties at Vincennes. The intellectuals of France soared into ecstasies of delighted pride when they found that a French Rinuccini and a French Peri had appeared in their midst ; and although not a note of Cambert’s music has been preserved, the chronicles of the time bear witness to its effect upon

those who heard it. So enthusiastic were Cambert's fellow-countrymen, that when Cavalli's *Serse* was brought over from Italy the year following and performed in the Palace of the Louvre on the occasion of the King's marriage, many of *Serse's* auditors grudged it their ears.

Perrin and Cambert eagerly made plans for following up their success. They boldly chose an ambitious theme, and set to work on an opera to be called *Ariane: ou le Mariage de Bacchus*. But opera is a world in which there have always been more breakdowns and missfires than in any other. In 1660 died Gaston of Orléans, in whose service the Abbé Perrin held the enviable post of "Introducer of Ambassadors." A year later died Cardinal Mazarin. French opera was silenced for ten years, and *Ariane* was never written.

Meanwhile, Lully went on manufacturing his monthly tale of dance-tunes. But Perrin watched the times, and prepared himself to make full use of the next opportunity. His chance seemed to come in 1669, when Louis XIV gave him by letters-patent an operatic monopoly for all France. The letters patent empowered Perrin to set up

throughout the kingdom "Académies d'Opéra," the operas to be in the French language. Perrin, who was a loyal friend as well as a scholar and an artist, at once turned to his old collaborator Cambert, and the two fell to work upon *Pomone*, a rustic opera prudently resembling the Pastoral with which they had triumphed ten years before. As the public insisted upon showy spectacles as well as drama, dance, and song, a third partner was found in the person of the Marquis de Sourdeac, who was famous as a stage-machinist. Nearly two years passed before all was ready; but when *Pomone* was brought to a hearing in Paris its reception paid amply for all the pains that had been poured out upon it. *Pomone's* poem and music are both extant, but they are sorely disappointing on the dramatic side. Indeed, after all that Perrin had said and written about his aims, it is puzzling to find his opera hardly distinguishable from a masque with recitatives.

The next chapter in the story of French opera—the chapter in which Lully enters as the cynical and successful villain—is obscure. According to some accounts the run of *Pomone* and

the other performances of the Perrin, Cambert, and de Sourdeac syndicate were so lucrative that Perrin alone received 30,000 livres in eight months. According to others, however, Perrin was being dunned within twelve months for money which he owed to the Marquis in respect of scenery and stage apparatus. In any case, it is beyond dispute that Perrin retired from the partnership, and that the book of words for *Pomone's* equally undramatic successor, *Les Peines et les Plaisirs de l'Amour*, was written for Cambert and de Soudeac by one Gilbert, secretary to the Queen of Sweden. But Perrin still enjoyed rights under the King's letters-patent. In opposition to his old friends, he associated with himself a musician named de Sablières and a poet named Guichard. Thus was opera, in the first year of its official existence, vexed by the rivalries and schisms which have alternately embittered and stimulated composers through the epochs of Handel and Buononcini, of Gluck and Piccini, right down to our own day.

[To these troubled waters Lully promptly came a-fishing. Hitherto he had only served opera by brightening the works of Cavalli with extra

numbers in the shape of dance-tunes, but he saw that his chance had come for entering into the fruit of others' labours. By playing off one man against another, and by judiciously investing part of his considerable savings, he was able to buy out Perrin and to get the operatic monopoly into his own hands. More. He prevailed upon the King to make the new letters-patent much more sweeping than those which had been granted to Perrin. The theatres lying outside the golden circle of Lully's monopoly were forbidden to employ more than two singers each, while their stringed instruments were restricted to six. By these greedy tactics Lully intended to enrich himself at the expense of old friends. For example, Molière, who had helped Lully with loans in the ex-scullion's less prosperous days, could not possibly keep up the standard of his ballet-comedies with only six players and two singers. As for Cambert, the pioneer of French opera and Lully's old colleague, he was driven to England before the year was out solely through Lully's intrigues.

But in spite of his despicable machinations, Lully did a great work in music, and he left opera

immeasurably better than he found it. The patent which had granted to him the monopoly of operatic representations in France provided that Quinault should be his librettist and St. Ouen his theatrical machinist. These were competent men. Quinault, in particular, did his work so well that his libretti survive among the very few opera-texts which are readable apart from the music. But Lully's was the master-spirit, and even Quinault's efficiency was largely due to Lully's cunning in managing men. When one of Lully's operas failed, the composer thrust his librettist aside and bought two texts from the brother of Corneille; but in the main he preferred Quinault, and in order to extract from him a supply of dramas written precisely to his own recipe, Lully made it a rule to pay the poet a yearly sum of 4000 francs, or double the sum which Quinault received from the King.

Anticipating Wagner, Lully regarded the writing of music as only a part of his business. Having been both an actor and an orchestral player himself, he knew what could be done, and insisted on his subordinates doing it. He was



PHILIPPE QUINAULT.
After Dubasty.

indefatigable in drilling the performers, and no detail was too great or too small for him, from the facial expression of the dying Armida to the nosegay nursed by the clumsiest shepherdess in the chorus. Like many other clear-headed and energetic men, he was goaded almost to madness by the slackness and stupidity of others. It is said that he once tore a violin from the grasp of a luckless player and smashed it to splinters across the blunderer's back. At other times he was known to strike and even kick the singers when they would not or could not sing as he intended. But the outcome of his domineering and violence was a dramatic truthfulness to which the Italians (especially the Neapolitans, whose star was already outshining that of the more earnest Florentines) made no pretence. Indeed, there are Italian opera-houses even in this twentieth century where, except in the single point of vocal display, the performances remain far below the standard of the seventeenth-century Lully. Our so-called "great" Italian tenors are nearly all mere vocalists and dogged enemies of art for want of a Lully with the power and the will to hold them in their due places.

Two or three of the operas or "lyrical tragedies" of Lully and Quinault were based on the romances of chivalry, such as *Roland*, *Armide*, and *Amadis*. But most of them professed to recall the tragedies of the ancient Greeks. The classical revival which preoccupied the mind of artistic Europe for over three hundred years was at its height in France under Louis XIV, and accordingly there is nothing surprising in the list of Lully's principal operas which included lyrical versions of the stories of Alcestis, of Theseus, of Perseus, of Proserpina, of Cadmus, of Atys, of Phaeton. Without doubt the boasted classical revival was a bungling affectation. Nothing could possibly have been devised that would have been more alien from the Greek spirit than the pomposity of Le Grand Monarque and his Court; and Lully and Quinault invariably portrayed the gods and goddesses and heroes and heroines of the Greek mythology not as they were, but as Lully's and Quinault's half-educated patrons thought they ought to have been. When Alcestis became Alceste and Theseus Thésée, those great ones changed more than their names; and if the ghost of Euripides ever strayed into

Lully's theatre, he would have been sorely puzzled as to what it was all about. But this was only a small blemish on Lully's work. In art, historical accuracy is not one of the cardinal virtues. The point is, that Lully succeeded in making Quinault's un-Greek, Frenchified heroines and heroes behave themselves in the musical and dramatic ways which led to a convincing result of noble tragedy.

A Lully-Quinault opera always began with an overture in which a massive and grandiose slow-movement was followed by a longer quick-movement, the whole being rounded off by a last movement as majestic and sonorous as the first. This was the famous form known among musicians as "the Lullian overture"; for although Lully took the pattern from Cambert, he wrought it so well that, outside Italy, this form of overture was taken by composers as a model for a hundred years.¹ As the orchestra

¹ As Lully's operas practically ceased to be performed before the French Revolution, and as his scores are not in general circulation, it may be useful to say that the overture to Handel's *Messiah* would be a Lullian overture if it closed with a repetition of the opening movement. The fugue (i.e. the second or quick movement) of the *Messiah* overture is far finer than anything of the kind in Lully; but Handel's slow movement, grand as it is, is not grander than some of Lully's openings.

was large and well rehearsed the effect must have been impressive. As soon as the broad and solemn chords of the slow-movement had composed the hearer to a mood of noble sorrow, the quick-movement bustled in to rescue him from the perils of morbidness ; and, although no such moralizing was intended by the musician, the whole overture prepared the mind for a true vision of human life, compact as it is of sunshine and rain, of laughter and tears.

The overture was followed by the prologue. The Nine Muses, the Three Graces, and the gods and goddesses of War and Love, of Earth and Fire and Sea, were usually in evidence with their attendant trains of sylphs, amoretti, and demons. Along with these well-worn mythological personages appeared a crowd of allegorical figures representing the provinces of France or the nymphs of the Seine, or anything else that could be made the mouthpiece of loyal and patriotic allusions to contemporary events. In the course of the prologue the King could depend on receiving a musical assurance that the Roman emperors would have envied his valour, might, and glory, and that his Queen united in

her person the charms of Juno, Venus, and Diana, with the attractions of all three Graces thrown in. But this effusion of courtly falsehood was not allowed to encroach too much upon dramatic propriety ; for after the prologue was finished the overture was played through again from beginning to end, and then the tragedy opened. Considering the times in which he lived, the soundness of Lully's genius is proved by the fact that he used for the tragedy a range of musical effects differing widely from the music of the prologue.

One of the evils from which music-drama still suffers is the belief of composers that the hero of the piece must be a tenor.¹ The famous saying that "tenor is not a voice but a disease" goes too far ; but, from a dramatic point of view, it is regrettable that purely musical considerations have led composers to entrust their manliest part to the singer who is generally the unmanliest-looking and the unmanliest-sounding man on the stage. Lully, with his sure instinct, often wrote the hero's music for a baritone or

¹ Or, worse still, an "artificial soprano," as in Handel's finest opera *Rinaldo*, and many of *Rinaldo's* successors.

a bass voice with which his martial flourishes of trumpets were quite at home. As for the music itself, in virtue of its dignity and expressiveness it stood in strong contrast with the glittering displays of mere vocalization which have made the stage sorrows of so many operatic heroes and heroines ridiculous.

The reader will naturally wonder how a large number of dances could be worked into Lully's lyrical tragedies without ruining their dramatic effect. In regard to some of his operas the answer is simple. For example, in *Roland*, while the hero is seeking his faithless Angelica he passes through a village where a country wedding is in progress. In this case it is obvious that the rustic dances are appropriate to the dramatic action. They are no more irrelevant than is the dance of apprentices and maidens on the banks of the Pegnitz in *Die Meistersinger*. But in other instances the explanation is not so ready to hand.

First of all, it must be clearly understood that Lullian stage-dancing was very different from ball-room waltzing and, still more, from cake-walks and from the jerky, tricky ugliness



LULLY AND HIS COLLEAGUES.

After Rigaud.

of modern ballet. It was dancing full of stately comings and goings, like the minuet, and was therefore all of a piece with the unflippant Lullian melody. Second, it must be remembered that in attempting to revive Greek tragedy the stage-managers of the sixteenth century felt themselves obliged to treat the chorus seriously. Not only did they lay upon the chorus its ancient task of acclaiming or bewailing the joys and sorrows of the protagonists, but they also gave it the work of satisfying the eye with a rhythmical background as of antique statues come to life. To the modern musician who reads the scores in his arm-chair, Lully's finales are rhythmically poor ; but to the eye and ears of contemporary opera-goers the whole effect of the passionate violins and imperious trumpets and ringing voices and swaying bodies must have been rich and stirring. Lully would never have endured the familiar modern chorus which, after singing the most strangely beautiful strain in the whole opera of *Lohengrin*, relapses into a mere stage-crowd of "supers," and listens to the Grail-Knight's disclosure of his supernal secret with an amount of

emotion and surprise which could not be smaller if he were reciting the multiplication table. Thin as they were musically, Lully's finales triumphed because every part of the whole, from the catgut in the orchestra to the fingers and toes of the chorus, was keenly alive and proudly in action. At a later stage, ballet became a nuisance to opera;¹ and composers of music-drama in the future will prefer carefully drilled stage-groups in shifting poses appropriate to the dramatic action. But, in opera's childhood, ballet was all for the best. Not only did it fill up what would otherwise have been too scanty an outline, but it also helped the cause of music pure and simple by sharpening men's sense of rhythm and form. To claim for Lully that he deliberately made the dance an element in his operatic scheme because he saw its artistic possibilities would be absurd; for he merely accepted the legacy of the old mascarades. But

¹ To cite one example, *Tannhäuser* was damned by the rattles and penny-whistles of the gilded youth of Paris chiefly because Wagner had refused to insert a ballet save at the point where it was relevant—namely, in Venus' cave, at the first rising of the curtain, and therefore too near dinner-time. As a result, France went many years without Wagner, to her great musical loss.

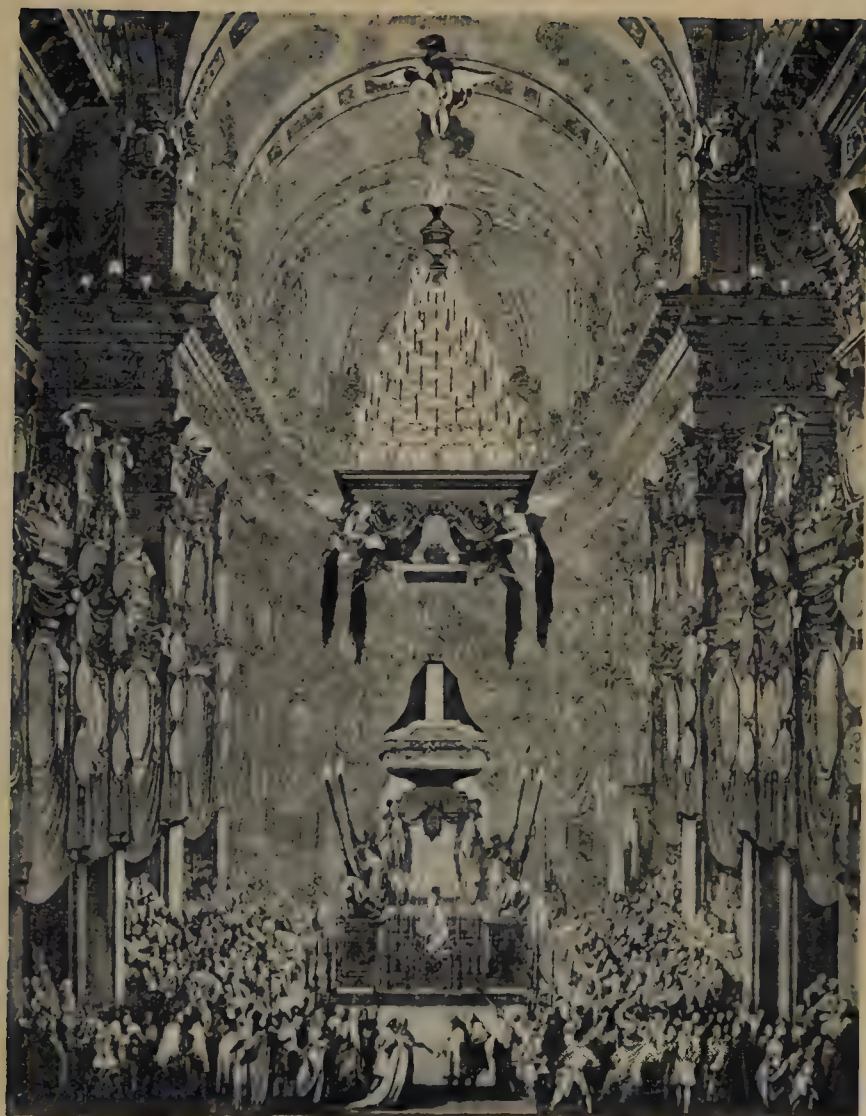
his glory remains. He poured new wine into old bottles until they glowed with rose and amber light.

It is through the medium of Madame de Sevigné that posterity has chosen to judge the small quantity of extant music which Lully wrote for the services of the Church. In a famous letter the excellent lady assured her daughter that Lully's *Libera* had "filled all eyes with tears," and that Madame de Sevigné herself did not "believe that there could be any other music in heaven." On the strength of these tributes opinions have been formed which the *Libera* itself, good as it is, cannot sustain. The mistake has arisen through reading Madame too literally and through neglecting the context of the eulogy.

It is possible to reconstruct the scene. The minister Seguier had died, and the Academy had deemed it fitting to erect an imposing catafalque in honour of their dead patron. The church chosen for the obsequies was that of the Fathers of the Oratory, which is used nowadays as a Protestant temple. As is proved by the accompanying illustration (reproduced from a

print of the time), the Academy strenuously did its worst in assembling pagan emblems of hopeless woe. Seguier's being what would be called to-day "a smart death," all Paris assisted at his funeral, and Madame de Sevigné's letter of 6 May, 1672, written on the morrow of the function, seems to have expressed the general satisfaction with the decorations. If Lully's *Miserere* indeed sounded well amid such sights, it can hardly have been church-music in the true sense of the term. But Madame de Sevigné's testimony is suspectable. In the very next sentence to that in which she protested her belief that heaven itself could have no nobler music, she went straight on to make her delicious jest about the absent Bishop of Marseilles, who "would not have stayed away if it had been the funeral of some one still living."¹ In short,

¹ Pour la musique, c'est une chose qu'on ne peut pas expliquer. Baptiste [i.e. Lully] avait fait un dernier effort de toute la musique du roi : ce beau *Miserere* y était encore augmenté ; il y eut un *Libera* où tous les yeux étaient pleins de larmes ; je ne crois point qu'il y ait une autre musique dans le ciel. Il y avait beaucoup de prélats ; j'ai dit à Guitaut ; cherchons un peu notre ami Marseille, nous ne l'avons point vu ; je lui ai dit tout bas ; Si c'était l'oraison funèbre de quelqu'un qui fut vivant, il n'y manquerait pas. Cette folie a fait rire Guitaut, sans aucun respect pour la pompe funèbre.



THE OBSEQUIES OF SEGUIER.

After Le Brun.

Madame's musical attitude appears to have resembled that of the young matron who, having always declared that she "loved music passionately," startled an audience during a sudden and unexpected pause after a crashing orchestral fortissimo with the words, "They're much nicer boiled."

It was in this same year, 1672, that Lully produced his opera *Les Fêtes de l'Amour et Bacchus*, with which the new theatre near the Luxembourg first opened its doors; and thereafter he never failed to bring forward at least one new opera a year until his death in 1687. During these fifteen years his wealth grew so enormously that it amounted at his death to about 800,000 livres, partly in investments, partly in sacks of Spanish doubloons and other gold. By heartless cunning he succeeded in crushing out potential rivals so thoroughly that, to borrow a phrase from modern mercantile slang, he practically "made a corner in music." His alert and sagacious greed taught him to evade all possible expenses as well as to woo emoluments and profits; and when, in 1681, he was ennobled and naturalized as a Frenchman, he managed to obtain these

favours and honours without paying a sou of the usual stamp-duties into the exchequer of the nation where he had won fame and fortune. He held non-musical sinecures as well as his appointments as composer to the King, as sole music-master to the Royal Family, and as "Surintendant de la Musique de la Chambre du Roy." Even his marriage (which took place ten years before his emergence as a composer of operas) does not seem to have been disinterested; for he took care to choose as a bride a daughter of the influential musician Lambert, "Master of the Court Music." Notwithstanding the calls upon his time and strength made both by his multiform duties and by his incessant intriguing, he found leisure to watch the property-market and to make large profits out of cunning investments in bricks and mortar. Sweetest of all, he could look down from his pinnacle of prosperity at his luckless old mistress La Grande Mademoiselle, whose tardily-found husband, a mere nobleman, had already said to her: "Louise of Orléans, pull off my boots."

Lully's premature death at the age of fifty-four is said to have been caused by one of his explo-

sions of temper. To celebrate the King's recovery from an illness he had written a *Te Deum*, and in beating time angrily with his bamboo cane he struck his foot so violently as to inflict a wound which killed him. The anecdotes of his death-bed, by which, much more than by his music, Lully is known to the general reader, are contradictory and distrustworthy. According to the common account, his confessor only consented to administer the last sacraments on condition that the manuscript of the dying man's unfinished opera should be thrown into the fire. Lully, says the anecdote, gave his consent and received the last consolations of religion; but when the holy man had left the house it was found that the score of the condemned work was safely under lock and key, and that the MSS. which had burned so brightly in the grate were band and voice parts only. In a later and embellished form the story states that Lully repented of his sacrilegious duplicity within twenty-four hours, and allowed the score to follow the parts into the flames.¹ In opposition to all this it is

¹ This fuller version is disposed of by the fact that Lully's last opera still exists. It is called *Achille et Polixène*, and was completed very finely

said that Lully's eleventh-hour conversion was complete ; that he repented bitterly his thousand meannesses to brother artists ; that he sang (some say composed) on his death-bed the penitential *Bisogna morire, peccatore* ;¹ and, in short, that he made a good end. Some support is given to this more charitable version of his dying by the fact that Quinault, after his old collaborator's funeral, became devout, and busied himself with an edifying poem called *The Destruction of Heresy*.

As certain works of reference persist in an error about the splendid monument in the church of the Petits Pères, erected by Lully's family in spite of their parsimony, it may save artistic pilgrims to Paris some trouble to state the actual facts. Lully's modest monument as it exists to-day is in the church of Notre Dame des Victoires, and is so placed that a stranger could hardly find it without instructions. Over the lintel of a doorway connecting two chapels on the

indeed by Lully's pupil Colasse. As for the anecdote as a whole, it is true that the Church frowned upon actors ; but, seeing that abbés, both in Lully's century and in the century following, wrote operatic libretti without incurring ecclesiastical censures, it is hard to believe that a confessor would order the destruction of a mere musical setting.

¹ Referred to in one modern account of Lully, with a disastrous absence of punctuation, as *Il faut mourir pecheur*.

north side of the nave may be seen a portrait-bust in relief. Lully's name does not appear, save in the following inscription carved on a stone slab which forms the under-side of the lintel itself in the thickness of the wall.

PERFIDA MORS, INIMICA, AUDAX, TEMERARIA ET EXCORS,
 CRUDELISQUE E CAECA PROBRIS TE ABSOLVIMUS ISTIS,
 NON DE TE QUERIMUR TUA SINT HAEC MUNIA MAGNA,
 SED QUANDO PER TE POPULI REGISQUE VOLUPTAS
 NON ANTE AUDITIS RAPUIT QUI CANTIBUS ORBEM
 LULLIUS ERIPITUR QUERIMUR MODA SURDA FUISTI.

The slab inscribed with these non-Christian verses is incongruously placed amid innumerable votive tablets bearing golden legends of thanks to Our Lady of Victories. These tablets are mostly of recent date, and there is no day in the year when their gilded letterings do not shine in the light of the many candles placed by the faithful around Our Lady's altar. On high days the church resounds with the *Salve Regina*, which was old when Lully's music was new, and with the chants which are still new now that Lully's music is old and half-forgotten. *Pópuli regisque voluptas!* The epitaph has an odd sound in such a scene. And yet it is good to take leave of Lully amid so much faith and hope and charity.

Borne away from home and fatherland before he was in his teens, and flung straightway into the midst of mean and heartless self-seekers, he hardly had a moral and spiritual chance. No doubt he was as much intrigued against as intriguing, and in driving his weaker brethren to the wall he was only acting like the other strong men in the worthless Court which was his world. But whatever may be thought of him as a man, he needs no defence as a musician ; for although he grabbed his monopoly like a sordid tradesman, he used it like a fine and conscientious artist.

RAMEAU

THREE statues of composers greet visitors to the magnificent seat of Grand Opera in Paris. They are the effigies of Lully, of Rameau, and of Gluck, the three chief glories of classical French opera. But it is important to remember that these three giants were not all three Frenchmen. Lully was an Italian, Gluck was a German, and only Rameau was a French-born son of France.

While Lully was multiplying lyrical tragedies and piling up hard coin of the realm in Paris, a respectable musician named Jean Rameau was playing the organ in the hoary cathedral of Dijon. To this worthy man was born, on 25 September, 1683—four years before Lully's death—a son, who received the Chrïstian names of Jean Philippe. Rameau *père* could not be expected to guess that his boy was destined to take the torch of French opera from the hand

of Lully and to pass it on, more gloriously flaming, to a genius far greater than the great Lully himself. Besides, one of Jean Philippe's brothers, Claude by name, had already been dedicated to his father's profession of organ-playing. It was therefore decided that Jean Philippe should neglect music and apply himself to the study of the law with a view to gaining the honourable position of a magistrate.

But Jean Philippe Rameau anticipated Robert Schumann, who gave his guardians the slip when they set themselves to turn him into a lawyer against his bent as a musician. The young Rameau, however, was more precocious than the young Schumann. In Schumann's case the battle of music was not pitched and won until he had come to manhood ; but in Rameau's the law was routed while he was still a lad.

At the age of seven little Jean could perform with distinction upon the clavecin, one of the keyboard instruments which prepared the way for our modern pianoforte. At fourteen, he could extemporize a fugue on any theme that was proposed to him. Meanwhile his classical studies fared badly. The Jesuits whose college he



RAMEAU.

From a Lithograph.

attended could make nothing of a pupil whose school-hours were spent in scrawling over his books and papers rough transcripts of all the music he could remember. When threats, arguments, and punishments had alike failed to break him in, he was expelled from the school. He could not spell ; and, had it not been for his hunger to devour every book that had ever been printed on musical science, nothing would have induced him to learn to read. Abandoning with a sigh his darling hopes of a magistracy, Jean Philippe's father bowed to the inevitable and allowed his intractable son to embark upon a musical career.

Dijon has been a considerable place for two thousand years ; and although it had lost its ancient splendour as the capital of independent Burgundy two hundred years before his birth, in young Jean Philippe's time it was still an imposing city, rich with the riches earned by the favoured Burgundian vintners. Within its high walls and broad earthworks rose many great and wealthy churches, each one with its corps of professional musicians. But although some of these organists and chapel-masters were learned

men, it soon came to pass that there was nobody in Dijon who could teach the amazing young Jean Philippe Rameau anything more about music.

Precocity in music on its technical side, however, does not necessarily amount to much in the long run. Both before and after Rameau's time there have been boy-prodigies who have ended by boring their hearers because their unnatural triumphs have somehow stunted their emotional growth. It was therefore a happy moment for art when Jean Philippe suddenly fell beautifully and impracticably in love. Into his seventeen-year-old heart there darted a glance from an adorable young widow; and thenceforward even music's own charms were too weak to soothe the youth's distracted breast. Indeed, for a time music ceased to interest him. But the energy withdrawn from organ-playing and composition was not allowed to evaporate in mere sighs. Rameau was never a milksop; and both by word and by letter he declared his love. And then it was that his early indocility under his Jesuit schoolmasters bore bitter fruit. His avowals were ardent; but the cruel-hearted

widow pointed out that they were also ungrammatical. His love-letters were passionate ; but the lady pouted over the bad spelling and the blots.

According to some hundreds of poets, it is generally regrettable that the fair should not be kind ; but if Rameau's adored young beauty had been more indulgent and less exacting, it would have been a misfortune all round. Stung into shame at his own uncouth ignorance, the lover went to work with a will at the mending of his bad writing, spelling, and speaking. Without these repairs to his education it would have been impossible for Rameau in later life to write the long series of theoretical treatises which did so much for the science and even for the art of music.

There were limits, however, to the patience of Rameau *père*. Sugaring the bitter pill of separation by declaring that a stay in Italy would be for Jean Philippe's musical good, he cut short the wooing by packing his son off to Milan. This was in 1701. But Milan could not hold him long. Perhaps the Italian opera of the moment, with its undramatic melodiousness, was

repugnant to his Lullian sympathies. Or it may have been that his torn heart would not suffer him to rest. Running against the manager of a travelling theatrical company he turned his back on Italy and made a tour of the south of France as first violin, visiting Marseilles, Nîmes, and Montpellier. At Montpellier (which is still a place of pilgrimage for musicians on account of the unique musical MSS. of the Middle Ages preserved in the library of the Faculty of Medicine) he is said to have halted for purposes of serious study. He also played at Lyons, not so very far from his native town; and, succumbing at last to home-sickness, returned to Dijon.

Of his interview with the perturbing young widow nothing is known. Possibly it never took place. But it is certain that Rameau's calf-love, like most derangements of the kind, healed itself without the desperate remedy of marriage. Returning fervently to his first love, the young man lived and worked heart and soul for music. At Dijon, however, he could neither develop his powers nor make full use of the musicianship he had already acquired. Paris beckoned to him;

and by 1706 he was challenging fate with a printed and published *First Book for the Clavecin*. During his stay in the capital he lodged with a wig-maker, as did the unlucky Haydn in Pilsen nearly sixty years later. As organist in the Jesuit convent in the Rue St. Jacques, he must have enjoyed some kind of an income as well as sundry professional opportunities; but for ten or eleven years after the publication of his book Rameau's life seems to have been ineffective, and the record is blank.

Not until 1717, when he was a man of thirty-four, did Paris hear much of Jean Philippe Rameau again. He had blossomed early; but the fruit of his talent and industry ripened late. In the year just mentioned the covetable post of organist at the church of St. Jacques became vacant, and Rameau emerged from some unknown corner as one of the candidates. At first he was warmly patronized by Louis Marchand, the organist to the King;¹ but as soon as he perceived that the young man from Dijon could

¹ Marchand was not without talent as a composer; but he survives in musical history partly through his taking up and dropping down of Rameau and chiefly because of his rivalry with Bach. (See p. 282.)

throw Marchand's own performances into the shade, the patron turned into an enemy and succeeded in frustrating Rameau's candidature. A greatly inferior musician received the appointment; and Rameau, smarting under this injustice, once more resumed his wanderings through the French provinces.

For a time Rameau played the organ in one of the churches at Lille. But the flat landscapes of the north could not long detain an impressionable creature who had been bred and born under the shadow of the mighty hill which looks down on romantic Dijon. Throwing up his Lille appointment he set his face towards the mountains, and at length halted in the town of Clermont-Ferrand. At Clermont-Ferrand, in the ancient Gothic cathedral built of gloomy lava from the extinct volcanoes near the town, Jean Philippe's brother Claude was settled as organist. After listening to Jean Philippe's weary story of disappointments in the past and to his plans of work in the future, Claude very handsomely surrendered his post in his brother's favour.

Even to-day, in spite of its commercial import-

ance, Clermont preserves an old-world quietness in the narrow and twisting byways which climb the hill in odd contrast with its modern streets and squares ; and it is still a city of books and learning. But when Rameau first looked upon its walls and towers, Clermont was a little mountain-city, remote from the turmoil of the world. Refreshed by two rivers and guarded by the enormous ramparts of the Puy-de-Dôme, Clermont sat dreaming of its glorious past. The bishops of Clermont who ruled and taught in the lava cathedral had succeeded one another for nearly fifteen hundred years. At Clermont seven ecclesiastical councils had solemnly assembled. The grand church of Our Lady, in which Peter the Hermit preached the first crusade, was still standing ; and the citizens could point out the birthplace of Gregory of Tours. Yet Clermont's pride was not all grounded in the Middle Ages. Less than a hundred years before Jean Philippe Rameau's arrival there, a Clermont mother had given birth to Blaise Pascal and to his gifted sisters. Accordingly, although the air of the town was charged with ancient ecclesiastical culture, it was also quick with modern literary

activity. In short, if Rameau had a book in him, leisurely, famous Clermont was the place to draw it out.

The book came. Undaunted by the humiliating fact that, after living exactly half his threescore years and ten, he could look back only upon a succession of failures, Rameau took up his pen. As a lover and as a composer he had drawn blanks, and as a performer he owed his modest dignities to the magnanimity of his brother Claude. He resolved, therefore, to try and batter down the wall of public indifference in a fresh place. Without abandoning composition, he plunged more deeply than ever into the study of harmony with the object of producing a treatise much more complete and searching than anything his predecessors had attempted.

It would require much more space than is available in this small volume to explain in popular language the contents of Rameau's *Traité d'Harmonie*, of his *Nouveau Système de Musique Théorique*, and of the other works by which he won his reputation as a theorist. But although the letter of his writings is too technical for



THE CONCERT.
After Vanloo.

general readers, their spirit is more easily described : for the spirit of Rameau was simply the spirit of his age.

The secular philosophers of eighteenth-century France, flouting tradition, custom, and authority, were determined to establish all things on a rational basis of nature. By "nature," they meant the solid world around them and under their feet. To take a late but familiar example, when those Frenchmen who had seized the reins of government after the first success of the Revolution began to go mad in the cause of "Reason," they dropped the familiar "Anno Domini" and started afresh with the "Year One of the Republic." Again, they renamed the months "according to nature," so that November became Brumaire, or the foggy month ; January, Nivose, or the snowy month ; March, Ventose, or the windy month ; and May, August, September, respectively Floreal, Thermidor, Fructidor, the months of flowers, of heat, of fruits. The year began on 22 September, because this day, by a remarkable coincidence, was the date both of the autumnal equinox and of the foundation of the Republic. Thus were the combined

calendars which had been bequeathed by pagan and by Christian Rome contemptuously swept away.

A like scorn of usage and authority was shown in the far more useful reform of the weights and measures. Instead of the yard with its arbitrary thirty-six inches, the pound with its awkward twelve or sixteen ounces, and all the rest of the fearsome standards by which our possessions are bought and sold, Great Britain was asked by France to join in the search for a new unit of measure and weight "based on nature." This was two years before the foundation of the Republic ; and unhappily the British Government refused to move. Thereupon the French went forward on their own account, and ultimately fixed the new unit or *mètre*, at a ten-millionth part of a quadrant of the meridian as calculated by measuring from Barcelona to Dunkerque. Having settled the *mètre* they had no difficulty in working out new weights and measures of capacity. They divided or multiplied their unit by easy tens instead of by unmanageable twelves. The cubic *decimètre* of water became the new unit of liquid measure, or *litre*, while a *litre* of

distilled water at freezing point gave the new unit of weight, or kilogramme.

This long account of the metric system may seem out of place in a small book on music;¹ but it would be hard to find any shorter or clearer way of expounding the theorist Rameau. The point is that the philosophers of Rameau's century yearned to conform all human institutions to nature, just as noon has always been fixed by the natural fact of the sun's highest ascension in the heavens. And it cannot be denied that some of their reforms were not only rational, but possessed of a certain grandeur. Under the metric system the smallest tradesman who sold a little laundress the stuff for her wedding-gown had the globe itself for a yard-stick; because he knew that his mètre was a round decimal fraction of the distance which parted the frozen Pole from the burning Equator.

Although practical effect and legal sanction were only vouchsafed to these reforms in the first year of the nineteenth century, it was midway

¹ Strange to say, some current books of reference give a blundering account of this simple matter. In one deservedly respected Encyclopædia it is gravely stated that a cubic decimètre of water weighs a gramme, instead of 1000 grammes.

in the eighteenth that the claims of "nature" were most ardently pleaded by Diderot, D'Alembert and the other Encyclopædists. But perhaps one may make bold to suggest that too much credit has been given to these interesting writers, whose abusiveness and self-ostentation ought to have raised more suspicion with regard to their originality as thinkers and their equipment as scholars. To claim on behalf of Rameau that he was the pioneer of culture "according to nature" would be too much ; and yet the fact remains that, nearly thirty years before the Encyclopædists initiated their celebrated work, Rameau had published a treatise on harmony "reduced to its natural principles." When it is remembered that the Encyclopædists fiercely attacked Rameau both as a musical scholar and as a private citizen, it is worth while pointing out that they had grounds for jealousy against the man who, in a dull little episcopal city amid the wild mountains of Auvergne, had written a book anticipating their fundamental principle.

Rameau's book was published in Paris, whither he repaired in person to force his work upon the world. He left Clermont-Ferrand amid the

lamentations of the citizens ; for Rameau was a brilliant executant as well as a learned theorist, and his improvisations upon the cathedral organ had become far-famed. But Clermont was too narrow for his ambitious activity. He reached the capital in 1721, and his treatise appeared during the following year. Before five years had passed he had been lifted into celebrity on conflicting tides of praise and blame. The French in which his treatises were written was untidy and unclear, and his reasonings abounded in errors and inconsistencies. But, as Rameau was a big enough man to admit mistakes and even to alter his mind as he advanced in knowledge, he could not be crushed by the defter but smaller-minded writers who at first resented his intrusion.

It is the glory of Rameau that he laid bare the natural foundations of harmony. In the first chapter of this book it was pointed out that Pythagoras based musical science on a doctrine of numbers. His successors accepted his conclusions, errors and all ; but they gradually freed themselves from the tyranny of his mistakes by the workaday principle that what sounded right

could not be very far wrong. In this rough-and-ready principle, however, dangers lay lurking. If every man chose to do what was right in his own ears and to devise cacophonous combinations, what conclusive argument could be used against him ?

Modern harmony is evolved from the triad, or common chord, consisting of the keynote, the third, and the fifth. Rameau showed that this triad is not arbitrary, but natural. It is not one combination, out of many others equally reasonable, which we accept merely because our ears have grown accustomed to it ; and that Rameau was right may be shown in a very simple way. Let the reader sit down at a pianoforte and, with his foot on the loud pedal, let him strike any low note. If, for example, he strike C, he will hear not only C, but also its third, fifth, and octave sounding sympathetically with it.¹ Rameau himself made this experiment, not on a pianoforte, but by means of the monochord ; and both physics and mathematics since Rameau's day have confirmed his findings.

¹ In the key of C major, of course the keynote, third, and fifth, the three components of the common chord, are C, E, and G.

Whether one measures the extent of the sound-waves in space or the duration of the vibrations in time, one finds proof of the truth unveiled by Rameau and only just missed by Pythagoras, namely, that the common chord corresponds with the simplest numerical ratios, and that it rests on solid nature.¹ The practical effect of Rameau's discovery was to put solid rock under the feet of composers. The old polyphonic music, with its intertwining of parts, had been fast passing away, leaving musicians to replace it by harmonic music. But while the old music had its reasonable rules and precedents, the new, until Rameau's time, moved onward like a ship without a compass, and was pushed along its proper course by the current of artistic taste alone.

The well-worn proverb which declares that a pound of practice is worth a ton of precept is often wildly untrue where musical theorists are concerned. As a rule, the ablest musical preceptors practise so lamely and tamely that their compositions weary the hearer well-nigh

¹ In one sense it would be extravagant to say that the most modern harmony is directly grounded in its entirety upon nature. Yet its most curious refinements are referable to the common chord on the last analysis.

to death. But Rameau's was an exceptional case. His works were worth hearing. While he was at Clermont building up his *Traité d'Harmonie*, he penned a good deal of interesting music for the clavecin and the organ. And during the years which elapsed between the first appearance of the *Traité* and the publication of the *Nouveau Système*, he was busy as a creative musician of a decidedly unprofessional kind.

The plate facing this page (reproduced from a print of the time) gives a fanciful representation of the origin of the Opéra Comique in Paris. The Opéra Comique is nowadays subsidized by the State, and handsomely housed in a great new theatre where operas so little *comique* as the passion-fraught *Carmen* are performed with all the intensity of lyrical tragedy. But the Opéra Comique began among clowns, tumblers, gingerbread-stalls, dancing bears, and obese ladies at Piron's¹ "Theatre of the Fair." For this barn or booth Rameau wrote *L'Endriague*, which was first played on a February day in 1723.

Meanwhile lesser composers were being ad-

¹ Piron, like Rameau, came to Paris from Dijon.



La Muse de la Comedie rassemble la Poésie, la Musique, & la Dance pour composer ses petits divertissemens, sous le nom d'Opera Comique.

THE ORIGIN OF THE OPÉRA COMIQUE.

After B. Picart.

mitted to the Académie Royale, and their untalented operas were being seriously performed on the grand scale in alternation with the revered masterpieces of Lully. That he should be persistently set aside galled Rameau, conscious as he was of his superiority to all the other French musicians of his day. Besides, there was another reason for pushfulness on his part. In 1726, at the age of forty-three, Rameau had wedded Marie Louise Mangot, a sweet-voiced damsel of eighteen summers.

Determined to break into the magic circle of grand opera, Rameau, a year after his marriage, began coaxing the dramatic poets for libretti. To the blind Houdar de Lamotte he wrote a remarkable appeal, in which he affirmed that he had learned "the art of concealing art" in his music. But Houdar de Lamotte was blind in more senses than one, and he refused to honour himself by writing Rameau's first grand libretto.

The way seemed to be opening when Rameau at last found a patron. La Popelinière, the Farmer-General, not only made the author of the *Traité* his clavecinist, but gave him the free run

of his private orchestra, his private theatre, and his private chapel, the organ and the choir included. Better still, La Popelinière obtained a libretto from Voltaire. It was a lyrical tragedy called *Samson*, and Rameau lost no time in setting it to music. But, on the eve of its public performance, the Académie Royale meanly¹ stepped in and forbade the production on the ground that the theme was Biblical.

Six years passed. Rameau found himself on the verge of fifty without having brought a single grand opera to performance. But at last the Abbé Pellegrin took pity on him, and furnished him with a libretto called *Hippolyte et Aricie*, based on the *Phèdre* of Racine. The Abbé Pellegrin, however, did not believe in doing anything for nothing. A witty couplet said of him that he dined off the altar and supped off the theatre. Accordingly the prudent abbé, having the *Samson* fiasco before his eyes, would not part with his poem until Rameau had given him a bill for 500 livres as security against

¹ "Meanly," because an opera called *Jephthah*, by one of the Académie's friends, was shortly afterwards accepted. Of course, the rule against Biblical dramas still holds good in England.

Hippolyte's failure. But even the Abbé Pellegrin cared for art, and as soon as he had heard Rameau's music to the first act, he tore the bill to pieces before the amazed composer's eyes.

All Paris, however, did not agree with the abbé. Rameau had committed the presumptuous crime of improving upon Lully, and although Lully had been dead for nearly half a century, there were still dilettanti who believed that Lully had spoken the last word concerning lyrical tragedy. Indeed, if Rousseau is to be believed, the fight against Rameau was carried to such lengths that some wretched creatures in the orchestra deliberately played wrong notes so as to make the music sound clumsy and ugly. But a pro-Rameau faction soon arose. The aged Campra, whose operas were among the best of those produced in France between Lully's day and Rameau's, magnanimously said that Rameau would outshine all his contemporaries, and that there were enough fine things in *Hippolyte et Aricie* for ten ordinary operas.

Step by step Rameau came into his own. Two years after *Hippolyte*, a ballet called *Les Indes Galantes* gave further proof of his powers, and,

after two years more, *Castor et Pollux* (1737) closed the mouths of most of his enemies. For twenty-five years he steadily reaped the harvest of success which had been so long in ripening. In addition to a *Second Book for the Clavecin*, which appeared exactly thirty-five years after the already mentioned *First Book* of 1706, he wrote enough operas to make up for his late entrance into the dramatic field. His lyrical works included *Pygmalion*, *Zaïs*, *Naïs*, and *Dardanus*. As the Académie did not relent towards *Samson*, the composer worked up a great part of *Samson's* music under the name of *Zoroastre*.

Less pleasing than Lully in the single point of dramatic melody, Rameau outran his great predecessor in all other musical respects. His harmony was grander than Lully's beyond all comparison, and his part-writing for human voices was far richer and more free. The accompaniments to his recitatives were full of right feeling for the characters of the various instruments which he so ingeniously combined.

Yet, with all this musical worth, the operas of Rameau lived shorter lives than Lully's. Their musical vitality was abundant, but it could not

long sustain the suffocating dead-weight of the libretti. Like Schumann's single opera, the beautiful but unlucky *Genoveva*, and like fifty other operas before and since, Rameau's works for the stage consisted of good music wedded to dry or foolish, or, at the very best, unsuitable texts. And for this disablement Rameau was himself largely to blame. Although the splendid fruit of Lully's enlightened partnership with Quinault still hung before his eyes, he used to maintain that the libretto was of small importance. He even went so far as to boast that he could set the "Gazette de Hollande" to music.

Of all art's many might-have-beens Rameau's case is one of the most tantalizing. While he was badgering the wrong people for libretti his fellow-townsmen and contemporary, the poet Crébillon, was often aimlessly employed. Whether Rameau and Crébillon were acquainted one with another in their boyhood's days at Dijon is not known ; but it is a great misfortune that the two men did not join their artistic forces. Crébillon is little read nowadays ; but a perusal of his *Rhadamiste et Zénobie* will

show how grand an occasion he could have provided for Rameau's largest harmonies.

That Rameau should have lost his way among the librettists is the more puzzling when one remembers that, by dint of practice, he became himself a man of letters. Indeed, he attained such proficiency as an author that he was not afraid to break a lance with foes no less formidable than the Encyclopædists. The Encyclopædists, unlike Socrates, were not wise enough to know that in some matters (including music) they were fools, and accordingly they marred their work by many blunders which specialists could have corrected. Rameau, in spite of his seventy years, came forward boldly with a pamphlet entitled: *Erreurs sur la Musique dans l'Encyclopédie*.¹ D'Alembert, the editor of the *Encyclopædia*, replied rebuking the outsider in a pontifical manner. But Rameau returned to the fight and indisputably had the best of it.

It was no new experience for Rameau to be in

¹ The articles on music in the *Encyclopædia* were mainly the work of Roussqau. In the year of Rameau's death, Rousseau revised his articles and collected them into his *Dictionnaire de la Musique* (1774). The print facing this page is a reproduction of the charming frontispiece to the *Dictionnaire*.



FRONTISPIECE OF ROUSSEAU'S "DICTIONNAIRE DE MUSIQUE."

After C. N. Cochin, fils.

the hot midst of battle. While his quarrel with the Encyclopædists was brewing, and long before the straitest sect of the Lullians had ceased to denounce his impious novelties, he became one of the protagonists in the fierce musical struggle known to our great-great-grandfathers under the name of the "Guerre des Bouffons."

The "Guerre des Bouffons" arose out of the visit to Paris of an Italian opera-company in 1752. This company had a strong card to play in the shape of Pergolesi's¹ *Serva Padrona* which was the talk of all Europe. *La Serva Padrona* was not an *opera seria* but an *opera buffa*; whence the phrase "Guerre des Bouffons." Or, to be precise, it was a "comic intermezzo." According to De Brosse, who made a round of the Italian opera-houses in 1740, it was the Italian custom to sandwich a comic intermezzo between the acts of a grand lyrical tragedy. But although comic intermezzi played the humble rôle of the stage Irishman who supplies the comic

¹ Giovanni Battista Pergolesi had been dead fifteen years when *La Serva Padrona* was first performed in Paris. Dying at the age of twenty-seven, he left behind him enough music (notably a *Stabat Mater*) to show that, had he lived, he would have won a place only second to Palestrina's in the list of Italian composers.

relief in a magniloquent melodrama, Pergolesi filled *La Serva Padrona* with so much vital beauty and abounding humour that the little piece shook French opera to its foundations.

In revisiting the many battlefields on which fashionable men and women, splitting into two hostile armies, have professed to fight for and against a Rameau or a Pergolesi, a Gluck or a Piccini, it must not be supposed that fashionable society necessarily cared a rap for conflicting ideals in music. Rival composers, to use a famous mixed metaphor, were often made stalking-horses by courtiers with a fish to fry on their own account. And it was so in the "Guerre des Bouffons." As Madame de Pompadour was a patroness of French music, the Queen was glad of a chance to annoy her by supporting the Italians. Hence the pamphlets which were flung about the opera-house from both sides were not disinterested arguments on the simple merits of an æsthetical dispute. But Rousseau's intervention was more serious. He went so far as to declare that "to learn how to compose one must go to Naples." After giving his reasons, he added : "The French airs are not airs at all, the

French recitative is not recitative. Hence I conclude that the French have not, and cannot have, a music of their own ; or, if ever they have one, it will be so much the worse for them.”¹

To Rameau the war brought luck. In face of the foreign invader the champions of native opera closed up their ranks and the Lullians accepted Rameau at last. But Rameau himself was too great a man to confine his musical sympathies within frontiers. Despite his load of years he kept a free mind ; and there are few among the many confessions of artists more striking than Rameau’s words to the Abbé Arnaud : “If I were twenty years younger,” he said, “I would go to Italy and take Pergolesi for my model ; abandon something of my harmony ; and devote myself to attaining truth of declamation, which should be the sole guide of musicians. But, after sixty, one cannot change.”

¹ “. . . que les airs Français ne sont point des airs, que le recitatif Français ne sont point du récitatif. D’où je conclus que les Français n’ont point de Musique, et n’en peuvent avoir ; ou que si jamais ils en ont une, ce sera tant pis pour eux” (End of Rousseau’s *Lettre sur la Musique Française*).

Throughout his closing years honours were heaped on the old man's head. His patent of nobility was enregistered. But he had reached the age at which such things are of small account. He died, a man of fourscore, on 12 September, 1764.

In contrast with Lully's, the personality of Rameau makes a pleasing impression on the student of his career. The belief of some writers that he was mean and heartless is mainly chargeable to the account of the Encyclopædists, who industriously defamed the memory of the man whose arguments they could not answer. After the fashion of John Milton, who answered the strictures of Salmasius on the English regicides by twitting Salmasius with his shrewish wife, Diderot tried to dispose of D'Alembert's victorious antagonist by contemptible scurrility. In his mean and clever book, *Le Neveu de Rameau* (which Goethe translated into German long before a French edition appeared), Diderot said that Rameau "only thought of himself," and that "his wife and daughter might die any time they pleased ; for, so long as the passing bells of the parish-church which tolled for them duly sounded

the twelfth and the seventeenth,¹ all would be well." As for the charge of selfishness, it is known that Rameau maintained an invalid sister for many years, and that he repeatedly helped an old organist, Balbâtre. The suggestion of unhusbandly and unfatherly indifference rests on no evidence outside Diderot's cunningly worded innuendo.

Purely as a musician, Rameau was more richly endowed than Lully and Gluck put together. And although he is directly represented by only a few harpsichord pieces in the repertory of to-day,² it must always be remembered that his work as a harmonist survives in the warp and woof of nearly all our modern music.

¹ An allusion to Rameau's acoustical discovery described on page 180. When the sounds of the common chord are heard in sympathy with a ground-tone they do not resound compactly, but in a formation extended through three octaves. The fifth is heard in the second octave, and the third in the third octave. Rameau therefore called these tones the twelfth and the seventeenth.

² In spite of its inexplicable omission of the most taking piece, *Le Tambourin*, Messrs. Augener's cheap album (No. 8345 in their edition) will give a fair idea of Rameau's slighter efforts.

PURCELL

ALTHOUGH the composer of *Dido and Æneas* was less than thirty-five years old when the composer of *The Messiah* was writing his first sonatas and cantatas, many people believe that the Englishman preceded the German by a stretch of time so long that while Handel belongs to the dawn of our own day, Purcell is mainly an olden-time curiosity for mere antiquaries to pore over. The truth is, that Purcell's birth was as near in time to Handel's and Bach's as was Wagner's to Tschaikowski's. Purcell, in short, belongs to modern music.

Probably his homely English name has helped to keep Purcell out of his rights. There is a widespread notion that a composer of music is different from creatures of everyday flesh-and-blood ; and accordingly many Englishmen find it difficult to believe that a little boy named Harry Purcell, who ran about in Old Pye Street,

Westminster, two hundred and fifty years ago, really and truly grew up to be one of the greatest composers not only of England, but of the world. Yet in Italy, in France, and in Germany, where musicians' names have sounds as homely in their respective languages as the name of Purcell has in English, people find no difficulty in taking the native composers seriously. To an Italian, Monteverde is Greenhill, Verdi is Mr. Green, Rossini is Mr. Redman, and Stradella, the romantic hero of elopements and fights, was named Street. To the Frenchman, Rameau is Mr. Branch. To the Germans, Bach is Brook or Beck, Weber is Weaver, and the creator of the heavenly Grail-music is, alas! Mr. Richard Cartwright!

The time has surely come for revising the almost forgotten truth that a man may be both a first-rank composer and a thoroughbred Englishman. Christopher Wren, John Keats, and John William Turner had names as home-made as Henry Purcell's: yet we accept them as an architect, a poet, and a painter equal to any of their rivals throughout the world. Purcell, like Milton and Wren and Dryden, his contempo-

raries, ought to form part of our national boasting. And along with Purcell in our places of pride should stand the grand English polyphonists, especially Tallis and Byrd, who laboured in music while Shakespeare and Spenser were labouring in poetry and with hardly less noble harvests.

Henry Purcell was born in the bad old times of the Commonwealth, when church-music had been well-nigh silenced throughout the whole of Great Britain. Not only the printed and manuscript copies of music which had survived the operations of Henry VIII and Edward VI, but also innumerable works of the Elizabethan polyphonists, had been scattered to the winds or delivered to the flames. At Canterbury the soldiers, after desecrating the tombs and smashing the brazen eagle of the lectern, proceeded to destroy the organ and to mangle all the service-books, "bestrewing the whole pavement with the leaves thereof." At Winchester a mixed host of Roundhead horse and foot marched into the cathedral with flags flying, drums beating, and matches burning; and, having seized "all the singing-books belonging to the Quire," they



HENRY PURCELL.
From an Old Engraving.

bore them in derision to an ale-house and there burnt them on a bonfire fed with communion-tables and altar-rails. At Chichester "they rent the books in pieces and scattered the torn leaves all over the church, even to the covering of the pavement." At Rochester the Puritan colonel, when he caught sight of the organ, cried out, "A devil on those bag-pipes!" and one of his men fired a pistol at the head of a prebendary who tried to prevent the sacking of the cathedral. As for Westminster Abbey :

Soldiers were quartered who brake down the rail about the altar and burnt it in the place where it stood ; they brake down the organ and pawned the pipes at several ale-houses for pots of ale ; they put on some of the singing-men's surplesses and, in contempt of that canonical habit, ran up and down the church ; he that wore the surpless was the hare, the rest were the hounds.¹

It was in 1643 that these fine-minded champions of spirituality in worship pawned the pipes and swallowed the ale of Westmînster : and fifteen years later, close to the scene of their orgy, Henry Purcell came into the world to

¹ Quoted from *Mercurius Rusticus* in *Purcell*, by W. H. Cummings.

make the Abbey's outraged vaults resound more proudly than ever with service high and anthems clear. The precise day of 1658 on which he was born is not known; but the spot where the birth took place can still be traced. The house was in St. Ann's Lane, Old Pye Street. Perhaps it is worth noting that Purcell was born not far from where Chaucer died.

The year of Henry Purcell's birth was also the year of Oliver Cromwell's death; and as soon as the man of blood and iron was gone the Commonwealth began to break up. Of the two tyrannies under which they had lived, the majority of Englishmen came to prefer even Stuart absolutism to the less picturesque and more inquisitorial dictatorship of the masterful Roundhead. Before Purcell could walk and talk, General Monk marched into London with his six thousand men.

Not until the end of the third month after "Old George" led his troops into the city did the Restoration become an accomplished fact with the landing of Charles II at Dover. But everybody knew what "Old George" was going to do, and Pepys, under the date 21 February,

1659,¹ has left a pleasant account of "the city from one end to the other with a glory about it, so high was the light of the bonfires." Pepys saw this cheery sight from "a room next the water" in a coffee-house; and while the fires blazed and the bells rang outside, he and his friends "had variety of brave Italian and Spanish songs, and a canon for eight voices which Mr. Lock had lately made on these words, *Domine, salvum fac Regem*—an admirable thing." As *Domine salvum fac Regem nostrum* is the old *God save the King*, it is evident that Mr. Lock had promptly seen which way the wind was blowing.

Along with Mr. Lock in Mr. Pepys' vociferous company was Mr. Lock's friend, a brother "master of musique," whose name stands in the diary as "Pursell." This was Henry Purcell senior, the great musician's father. As soon as Charles II had fairly begun to reconstitute royal institutions in England, Purcell senior was amply remembered. He became a gentleman of the Chapel Royal, and, according to the Chapel

¹ Old style. With Pepys, of course, the year 1660 began on the 25th March following.

cheque-book which has been preserved, he received four yards of fine scarlet cloth for a gown to wear at the King's coronation. He was also made a member of the King's band, a "singing-man" of Westminster Abbey, and master of the Abbey choirboys.

By this time the reader of these pages will have learned that the office of "master of the children" was one of honour and importance. Orlandus Lassus and Palestrina had not regarded it as beneath their dignity. But in the early years of the Restoration the duties of the master of the children at Westminster Abbey were exceptionally onerous. The master's first difficulty was to find the children. In the established choirs of cathedral and collegiate churches new boys are received only one or two at a time as the voices of their elders break; and all except the most idle and stupid of them are soon absorbed into their particular choir's tradition and routine. Under the Puritans, however, the historic "chapels" had been disbanded, and the recruiting of boy-choristers had entirely ceased. The result was that choirmasters under Charles II had often to content themselves with the

tenor and bass men who had been soprano and alto boys before the outbreak of the Civil War. As boys were not available, the composers either wrote anthems for men's voices only or directed the upper parts to be played by the cornets.

With boys at a premium it may fairly be conjectured that the master of the Westminster children did not postpone the musical education of his little son. But he was not suffered to make more than a beginning. In the midst of his prosperity—for he had also received the important appointment of music-copyist at the Abbey—he was cut off. He died on 16 August, 1664; and, as sepulture in Westminster Abbey had not yet come to be a jealously guarded honour, he was laid to rest in the cloisters.

Like the family of Bach, the family of Purcell was pervasively musical. Thomas Purcell, little Henry's uncle, upon whom the guardianship of the orphan devolved, had worn his four yards of scarlet cloth and sung at the coronation by his brother Henry's side. Many old account-books and warrants are extant containing entries relating to his appointments and emoluments. He was named by the King "a musitian in

ordinary for the lute and voyce," "a composer in ordinary for the violins," master of the King's four-and-twenty fiddlers (a band formed in emulation of the "Violons du Roi" of Louis XIV, already referred to in the chapter on Lully), and a "Marshall of the Corporation of Musique in Westminster." The total moneys payable to him on various accounts made up a respectable sum; but the Merry Monarch was so fitful a paymaster that Pepys, only six years after Charles came to the throne, wrote it down that "many of the musique are ready to starve, they being five years behindhand with their wages."

The boy Henry was received into the Chapel Royal as a chorister immediately after his father's death. At the Chapel Royal the master of the children was Captain Cooke. Before the Civil Wars Cooke had been a gentleman of the Chapel; but when the fighting began he took the field for the King and became a captain. It was not, however, solely in acknowledgment of his loyal prowess that Charles appointed him to the mastership of the children. The diary of Pepys, who was an enthusiastic amateur and no bad judge of professional music, contains a dozen



A LADY PLAYING.

After Terborch.

entries in praise of Cooke's compositions ; and his quality can be still better tested by the fact that Pelham Humphreys and John Blow, as well as Henry Purcell, were among the famous composers who received instruction in his school.

It is said of Captain Cooke that he was a coxcomb, and that his death in 1672 was not unconnected with the chagrin he felt at the growing popularity of his own pupil, Pelham Humphreys. But he seems to have done all his duty by young Purcell. At the age of nine the lad found himself in print, his first published work being a short three-part song called *Sweet Tyranness, I now resign*. At eleven "Master Purcell" wrote the music for *The Address of the Children of the Chapel Royal to the King and their Master, Captain Cooke, on His Majesties Birthday, A.D. 1670*. This was the beginning of his prodigious activity. He began to pour out anthems ; and it is even claimed for him that the theatre-music traditionally known as *Lock's Music for "Macbeth"* was written by the learned and ambitious Child of the Chapel Royal.

The reader should remind himself that although, for the sake of continuity, the foregoing

chapter carried on the story of French music well into the eighteenth century, Captain Cooke and Pelham Humphreys and Henry Purcell all lived and died in the seventeenth century, and were therefore contemporaries of Lully. It is to the credit of King Charles that he not only promised but paid to the young Humphreys at least four hundred and fifty pounds to defray the cost of his studying under Lully in Paris. The youth was on the Continent three years with not altogether happy results. Says Pepys :

Home, and there find as I expected Mr. Cæsar and little Pelham Humphreys, lately returned from France, and is an absolute Monsieur as full of form and confidence and vanity, and disparages everything and everybody's skill but his own. But to hear how he laughs at all the king's musick here . . . that they cannot keep time or tune, nor understand anything.

Humphreys was Purcell's senior by eleven years, and on the death of Cooke he succeeded to the mastership of the children. Newly wedded to a bride of rare beauty and rising higher every month in royal favour, Pelham Humphreys seemed to be the spoilt child of fortune ; but

within two years the pavement of the Abbey cloisters was lifted to receive his poor young body.

The third master of the children in the reconstituted chapel was Dr. John Blow. Although (or because) he had never been sent to France, Blow was a musician of remarkable attainments. He had splendid natural gifts, and his music, which was often far in advance of his epoch, is intrinsically more interesting than Lully's. He was a great enough man to rise above jealousy; and although he soon discerned that Purcell had it in him to outshine his master as brilliantly as Pelham Humphreys had outshone Captain Cooke, he appears to have done all he could to push his pupil forward. In 1676 Purcell was made music-copyist at the Abbey, and it is even said that, in 1680, Blow resigned the Abbey organ in Purcell's favour.

But the path to the highest musical glory and the richest rewards no longer wound in and out among the stone columns and under the dim vaults of churches. Monteverde had come and gone, and the New Music divided Purcell from Byrd and Tallis and the other Tudor writers of

motets and masses. To King Charles and his Court church-music was mainly an additional item in the enjoyments of each week—a chastened enjoyment, no doubt, but an enjoyment first and foremost. The Netherlanders had generally written church-music for musicians; Palestrina wrote it for Christians: but the composers of the Restoration had to write it for worldlings. And, as in the case of Lully, the worldlings did not care to listen to a composer in church unless he could prove his powers in the world. Accordingly Henry Purcell's occupations immediately after he had reached his eighteenth year are said to have been fearfully and wonderfully mixed. As the Abbey music-copyist he must often have laboured at the churchly and learned task of bringing order out of the chaos in which lay the surviving fragments of the Elizabethan part-books, while the rest of his time was devoted to secular composition, not excluding theatre-music for the licentious Restoration dramatists.

Until quite lately all Purcell's biographers somewhat indolently concurred in crediting the lad Purcell with certain compositions for the theatre

which are marked by such a mature worldliness that it gives one a shock to find them ascribed to a youth in his teens. For example, it has been stated over and over again that Purcell wrote the outspoken music of Shadwell's *Libertine* as early as 1676, during his first year as music-copyist. *The Libertine* was based on the same story as that of *Il Dissoluto Punito*, now known to all the world as Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. It has also been regularly affirmed that, in 1677, Purcell wrote theatre-music for a work by the naughty Mrs. Aphra Behn. The truth is that all his important theatre-music belongs to the last decade of Purcell's life. But the fact remains that secular preoccupations or some other cause moved the young man to give up his post as music-copyist in 1678.

In their anxiety to make the most of a precocity which in Purcell's case was not strongly marked, all the popular writers of his life have affirmed that the astonishing opera of *Dido and Æneas* was written in 1675, when the composer was only seventeen. But *Dido and Æneas* cannot have been produced before 1680, as it was "performed at Mr. Priest's Boarding-school at

Chelsey,"¹ and the date of Priest's migration to Chelsea is approximately fixed by an advertisement in the *London Gazette* for 25 November, 1680, which reads :

Josias Priest, dancing-master, who kept a boarding-school of gentlewomen in Leicester-fields, is removed to the great school-house at Chelsey that was Mr. Portman's. There will continue the same masters and others to the improvement of the said school.

From the fact that *Dido* cannot have been performed before 1680, it has been inconsequently concluded, even by Purcell's often admirable biographer, Mr. W. H. Cummings, that the opera belongs to that year. But Mr. Josias Priest remained a long time at "the great school-house that was Mr. Portman's" ; and Mr. W. Barclay Squire has recently almost proved, by a curious collation of out-of-the-way evidence, that *Dido* was composed after the final fall of the Stuarts, when Purcell had passed his thirtieth year. The point is important. To date *Dido and Æneas* in 1675, or even in 1680, is to set the student

¹ Chelsea is meant. Sir Hubert Parry's "Chertsey" in *The Oxford History of Music*, Vol. III, is probably a slip of the pen.

of Purcell's work an insoluble riddle. It would not be one whit more misleading to assure a student of Wagner that *Tristan and Isolda* was written before *The Flying Dutchman*. But both the musicianship and the emotional contents of *Dido* become intelligible when Mr. Squire's conclusions are accepted.

It is said that, despite his ceasing to be the Abbey copyist, Purcell did not desist from writing religious music. But if the truth must be told, his best anthems in 1679 were only accidentally religious. One John Gosling, or Gostling, a minor canon of Canterbury Cathedral, came Purcell's way. Gosling was blessed with one of the most stupendous and widely-ranging bass voices on record. This was the Gosling upon whose name Charles II made the obvious pun, and to whom he gave a silver egg full of guineas with a graceful speech about eggs being good for the voice. In order to have the pleasure of composing for the grand voice of this cleric, Purcell wrote, *Behold, I bring you glad tidings*, and other anthems in which the part for the solo bass went down to low F, E, and even D. One of these anthems was the striking

They that go down to the Sea in Ships. Its occasion was the exciting storm off the North Foreland, when King Charles and the Duke of York were forced to "hand the sails" of the new yacht *Fubbs* (so called after her plump or "fubby" grace the Duchess of Portsmouth) like common seamen.

What happened to Purcell in 1680 is not clearly known. But in that year Dr. Blow, impelled either by a magnanimous desire to see his old pupil make the best use of his talents or by some less spiritual motives, retired from his position as organist of Westminster Abbey. Purcell succeeded him. He had only just come to man's estate; but he held the post with ever increasing glory till his death at the age of thirty-seven, when Blow returned to the old organ-bench once more.

From the outset Purcell appears to have taken himself with becoming seriousness in his new position. He married without delay. Of his bride little is known save that her name was Frances. Sir John Hawkins, writing eighty years after the alleged event, transcribed with a wavering pen some wretched hearsay to the

effect that Frances was a shrew, and that she greatly hastened her consumptive husband's death by shutting him out of doors all one November night because he had disobeyed her orders and returned home after twelve o'clock. If this were true, there would be a grim prophetic irony in the fact that Purcell's first composition was called *Sweet Tyraness, I now resign*. But it is perhaps merely one more product of the persistent myth according to which all famous artists have been precocious, poor, and unlucky in love.

In days when most things went by favour, worldly prudence demanded that one should neglect no opportunity of flattering the great. Occasions for loyal outpourings abounded. When the King or the Duke of York went out of town, it was in the nature of things that His Highness should come back again; and Purcell was careful to compose for the return a "Welcome Song" or ode of thanksgiving. That he should have written *A Welcome Song for His Royal Highness's return from Scotland* was natural enough in days when Englishmen had hardly ceased to think of Scotland as a foreign country, and when London and Edinburgh were a week's journey

apart ; but it tries one's gravity a little to meet with such tributes as the ode for the King *On his return from Newmarket*. Purcell, however, could play the courtier without ceasing to be an artist. That his attachment to the Stuarts was only superficial is proved by the ease with which he transferred his allegiance to Dutch William ; and the ceremonious music which he wrote for both dynasties was as good as he could make it. His anthems for the coronation of King James, *I was glad* and *My heart is inditing*, are among his best works, while his *Ode in honour of King James*, beginning *Sound the Trumpet, beat the Drum*, was immediately acknowledged to be so fine a masterpiece that its duet, *Let Cæsar and Urania live*, used to be inserted in the birthday odes of Court-composers throughout the whole century following Purcell's death. If his music for William and Mary was even finer than his music for Charles and James, the reason was simply that Purcell had grown to be a riper man and a bolder musician.

The newly married composer's loyal attentions to the Court did not pass unrewarded. In 1682, without having to abandon Westminster Abbey,

he was granted the dignity and emoluments of Organist of the Chapel Royal. In gratitude Purcell set about "laying at His Majesty's sacred feet" his first printed volume, called *Sonnatas of III Parts*. In the preface to this work Purcell, who never fully realized how truly English was his own genius, protested that he had—

. . . faithfully endeavour'd a just imitation of the most fam'd Italian Masters; principally to bring the Seriousness and gravity of that sort of Musick into vogue and reputation among our Country-men, whose humour, 'tis time now, should begin to loath the levity and balladry of our neighbours.

A little further on Purcell declared that he was "not ashamed to own his unskilfulness in Italian Language"; which was, perhaps, just as well seeing that he went on to define a *Largo* as "a very brisk, swift or fast movement." But the end of his preface is wholly delightful:—

The Author has no more to add, but his hearty wishes, that his Book may fall into no other hands but theirs who carry Musical Souls about them; for he is willing to flatter himself into a belief that with Such his labours will seem neither unpleasant nor unprofitable. Vale.

Unhappily, the persons who carry Musical Souls about them have never been named Legion ; and as Purcell had modestly fixed the subscription price for his book at ten shillings, a good part of the engraver's and printer's charges had to be defrayed out of his own pocket. It is therefore not surprising that upon his second venture into music-publishing Purcell denied himself the luxury of a copper-plate engraver and brought out a volume poorly and cheaply printed from movable type.

During the short and luckless reign of the second James, Purcell was prolific in loyal outpourings, including *Why are all the Muses Mute?* and *Ye Tuneful Muses*. Yet, oddly enough, fate had marked him out to do as much as any man in England for "the Glorious Revolution." Without dreaming of the uses to which it would be put, Purcell composed a military "Quickstep" just when the feeling against King James was rising to its height. It happened that the music of this Quickstep could be fitted to the words of a doggerel song called "Lilli-burlero," in which Roman Catholics in general and the Irish



THE LUTE-PLAYER.
After Franz Hals.

Papists in particular were roundly ridiculed. According to Bishop Burnet, the song—

. . . made an impression on the army that cannot be imagined by those who saw it not. The whole army, and at last the people, both in city and country, were singing it perpetually, and perhaps never had so slight a thing so great an effect.

To be faithful to the Stuarts meant that one could not join in singing the ear-tickling, irresistible strain, and the result was that thousands of people who had no other reason for welcoming a Dutchman and a Calvinist went over to William's side. Lord Wharton, the Viceroy in Ireland, who is said to have been the first to pounce upon Purcell's catchy tune, boasted that "Lilli-burlero" had "sung a deluded prince out of three kingdoms."

Having thus assisted, albeit involuntarily, to seat William firmly upon the throne, Purcell naturally reckoned on a modest share of the loot. Accordingly he bestirred himself to make profitable use of their Majesties' coronation. In Purcell's time the Abbey organ was placed on the north side of the choir, so that persons up in the organ-loft had a direct view of the low platform

or "theatre" on which the principal solemnities took place. Seeing that the owner of a single house near the west end of the Abbey is stated by Sir John Hawkins to have netted £500 simply for his view of the outdoor procession, a few seats in the organ-loft were no doubt marketable at a great price. Purcell did not neglect his opportunity. An unknown quantity of cash came into his hands. But he had reckoned without the Dean and Chapter, who solemnly resolved on 18 April, 1689, that Mr. Purcell was—

. . . to pay to Mr. Needham such money as was received by him for places in the organ-loft, and in default thereof his place to be declared null and void, and his stipend or salary to be detained in the treasurer's hands till further orders.

Mr. Purcell paid, and kept his place. And instead of sulking, he promptly came forward with another Welcome Song and with an ode acclaiming "the Great Nassau." Meanwhile his works for the theatre were multiplying; and it is to this period that the wonderful *Dido* belongs.

The long persistence of musical writers in their error as to *Dido's* date has obscured the

opera's true history. It appears that Charles II had brought over from France one Grabu to succeed the dead Pelham Humphreys as a purveyor of Lullian operas. The luckless Cambert,¹ whom Lulli had manœuvred out of France, is also said to have laboured at Charles's Court. But the transplanted music of these Frenchmen did not thrive on British soil. Under James II Grabu enjoyed every advantage, including the royal patronage and a libretto by Dryden called *Albion and Albanus*. The great man was graciously pleased to approve of Dryden's libretto, which, he said—

. . . could not but excite my genius and raise it to a greater height in the composition—even so as to surpass itself.

But, in spite of the raising and exciting of his genius, Grabu's opera came to grief. Dryden, who was one of the soundest critics who ever lived, threw the Frenchman over and thenceforward allied himself with Purcell. It was to Purcell that he entrusted *King Arthur*, the sequel to *Albion and Albanus*, as well as *The Indian*

¹ See page 147.

Queen, The Indian Emperor, and Œdipus. Indeed, so close became the partnership between the composer and the poet that Dryden is said to have flown more than once for refuge to Purcell's official rooms at St. James's Palace, when his creditors were hot on his track to imprison him for debt.

It must be understood that the pieces just named, as well as all the rest of the works for the public theatres in which Purcell took a hand, were not operas or music-dramas, but simply spoken plays with varying amounts of incidental music. Dryden and the lesser playwrights were not willing to shrink down into mere librettists for the honour and glory of Purcell or any other composer. If one of the four sovereigns whom he served had had the wit to give him a free hand in the matter, Purcell would probably have founded a school of English opera far finer than any in Italy or France, and thus the main currents of the world's music would have thenceforward flowed in different channels. But the golden opportunity was missed ; and Purcell's first and last commission for an opera pure and simple came from the already mentioned danc-

ing-master, Josias Priest, on behalf of a few young misses at school. So magnificently did Purcell rise high above this petty occasion that *Dido and Æneas* is admitted to be the finest opera of its epoch ; but events separated it from the broad stream of musical life, and its due influence upon artistic Europe was frustrated. Nor can Europe be justly blamed. It is not at the "breaking-up" or prize-giving of a suburban seminary for young ladies that one expects the first stirrings of an æsthetical revolution.

Nowadays, however, England has no excuse for indifference. *Dido* is so short and straightforward that there are few towns without resources sufficient for its tolerable performance. It is very simply scored for two violins, a viola, a bass, and a harpsichord. Throughout its brief course, the work is so clear and strong that only the most unmusical and inhuman hearers could succeed in feeling bored. It is true that Belinda, as a name for Dido's confidante, is a little trying ; but there is a long-established precedent for changing this poor lady's name to Anna. It is true, alas ! that much of the libretto is shockingly bad ; for instance, the Witches' Chorus :

GREAT MUSICIANS

In our deep-vaulted cell
The charm we'll prepare ;
Too dreadful a practice
For this open air.

But, as a whole, the verse is endurable, and it is worthy of the subject in the closing elegy :

With drooping wings ye Cupids come
And scatter roses on her tomb.

The music, however, would make triumphant amends for a downright bad poem—which *Dido* is not. From the sinister Prelude and the popular "Echo" chorus nearly every bar brims over with truth and beauty. Dido's Death-Song, "When I am laid in Earth," is one of the noblest pages in all music. It is built upon a solemn ground-bass, seven times repeated. Upon this instrumental foundation, like a seven-times-pro-nounced sentence of implacable Fate, Purcell has built vocal phrases of such ever-increasing poignancy that the hardest-hearted cannot listen unmoved. It ought to be a point of national honour in every town of England to perform *Dido and Æneas* at least once every three years.

So far as revivals of Purcell's dramatic music are concerned, it is a case of *Dido and Æneas*

or nothing. For one reason or another the plays with which his remaining theatre-music is bound up would hardly be endured by modern audiences. Take, for example, *The Fairy Queen*, the theatre-copy of which was discovered in 1901 among the belongings of the Royal Academy of Music.¹ The title rings alluringly of Spenser, but, on examination, the thing turns out to be a version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in which not a single line of Shakespeare's has been retained. In one or two cases, notably in *Dioclesian*, which is almost an opera, and in *King Arthur* with its shivery "Frost Scene" and its defiant "Come if you dare," the music makes a fairly intelligible sequence; but, generally speaking, the diverse sets of pieces are only valuable for a song or two here and there, such as "Full Fathom Five," and "Come unto these yellow sands" in *The Tempest*, and "I attempt from Love's sickness to fly" in *The Indian Queen*.

So pleasing was *The Indian Queen* to the public of Purcell's own day, that it was honoured with

¹ This was perhaps the score which was advertised as lost in the *London Gazette* dated 13 October, 1700, when it was promised that twenty guineas would be paid to the person bringing the said score to Mr. Zackary Baggs at Covent Garden Theatre.

the attention of a firm of music-pirates. The pirates' Preface is too rich a repository of dignity and impudence to be passed over. It runs :

The publishers to Mr. Henry Purcell.

SIR, having had the good fortune to meet with the Score or Original Draught of your Incomparable Essay of Musick compos'd for the Play called the *Indian Queen*, It soon appear'd that we had found a Jewel of very great Value; on which account we were unwilling that so rich a Treasure should any longer lie bury'd in Oblivion; and that the Commonwealth of Musick should be deprived of so considerable a Benefit. Indeed, we well knew your innate Modesty to be such as not to be easily prevailed upon to set forth any thing in Print, much less to Patronize your own works, although in some respects Inimitable. But in regard that (the Press being now open) anyone might print an imperfect Copy of these admirable Songs or publish them in the nature of a Common Ballad, we were so much the more emboldened to make this Attempt, even without acquainting you with our Design; not doubting but your accustomed Candor and Generosity will induce you to pardon this Presumption. As for our parts, if you shall think fit to condescend so far, we shall always endeavour to approve ourselves your obedient servants.

Pirates, however, were among the smallest of Purcell's troubles. Death knocked often at the door of the house in Dean's Yard, and child after child was carried forth to the greedy tomb in the Abbey cloisters. As for the young father himself, he knew that he came of a consumptive stock, and he wrote with feverish activity so as to finish his work before the long night should descend upon his short day. When the end drew near it was naturally in religious forms that he expressed his grandest thoughts, as in the long-lived *Te Deum* and *Jubilate in D* for voices, organ, and orchestra, the finest of all his fine compositions for the feast of St. Cecilia, the patron-saint of music.

For Queen Mary's funeral in Westminster Abbey, which was solemnized only eight months before his own, Purcell created the most enduring of all his sacred works. The day of the Queen's interment was gloomy and stormy, with a few flakes of snow. In the midst of the vast church, which was strangely bright with the trembling flames of a thousand candles, a purple and gold coffin held the remains of her who had knelt on the same spot hardly six years before

to receive a corruptible crown. From the dimness of the high roof a robin-redbreast, a fugitive from the storm, kept flying down and perching upon the hearse amidst the crown and the sceptre and the embroidered banners which mocked the dead woman who lay still beneath their glittering weight. It was then that Purcell's anthem, accompanied by mournful trumpets, broke out with its solemn confession, *Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts*. And at every choral funeral in Westminster Abbey since the dreary day when Queen Mary was laid in earth these great words have been sung to Purcell's great music.

It was on 21 November, 1695, at the hour when most of the musicians of the Western Church were celebrating the first vespers of the Feast of St. Cecilia, that Purcell passed away. His will, made on the day of his death, thanked God that he was "in good and perfect mind and memory." He bequeathed everything to his wife, who began to publish his works soon after her husband's death. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, under the organ.

It is said that while Purcell lay dying Arcangelo

Corelli, the gifted pioneer of violin-playing as we understand it to-day, was on the way to our shores for the express purpose of meeting "Harry Purcell . . . the only thing worth seeing in England." Although he expressed himself thus ignorantly and arrogantly, Corelli's enthusiasm does him credit. In his own narrow garden-plot of instrumental music Corelli perceived that Purcell was almost his equal, while the Englishman had also made hundreds of triumphant progresses through those broad vales and steep defiles of choral and dramatic music which the Italian had never ventured to enter. And it is this exceeding length and breadth of Purcell's whole achievement which most surprises the modern student. Everything that every musician of every country had ever done up to the closing years of the seventeenth century seems to have been assimilated, consciously or unconsciously, by Henry Purcell. Yet his vast acquirements were not vast enough to smother his inborn genius. Most of the defects of taste in his compositions, such as the dance-movements in the overtures to his church-anthems, were due to the preferences of his patrons ; and his

failure to build up a lasting school of English music was inherent in social and political circumstances which his activity was too short-lived to transcend.

The open-mindedness of Purcell in regard to musical grammar is writ large both in his practice and in his theory. Concerning "Mr. Simpson's rule in three parts for counterpoint," Purcell wrote in his revision of *John Playford's Introduction to the Skill of Musick* that the said rule was "too strict and destructive to good air, which ought to be preferred above such nice rules." The words give the key to the character of Purcell, who was born to lead his contemporaries rather than to follow his predecessors. But he did not live long enough to reweld England into that mass of general European culture from which the Reformation and the Commonwealth had broken our country away. Had the gods granted him twenty extra years of health and strength, the genius of Purcell might have flung a golden bridge across the Channel; but he died at thirty-seven, leaving England an island still.

More. Had Purcell lived twenty years longer,

Handel, on his first visit to England, would have found a musician as wonderful, though not as gigantic, as himself in possession of the field. Prosaic readers may exclaim impatiently that poor, consumptive Purcell did not live twenty years longer and there's an end of it. No doubt they are right ; and yet one cannot forbear a sigh at the thought that if Westminster Abbey and Dean's Yard had been built on breezy Hampstead instead of in foggy Westminster the musical history of the world would have been changed.

HANDEL

ON the twenty-third day of April, 1683, there was a decorous wedding at Halle, in Saxony, seven or eight leagues north of Leipsic. To say that it was a case of May marrying December would be both unkind and untrue. In this instance the end of October was marrying the beginning of July. To be precise, the bride, Dorothea Taust, was just thirty-two, while her spouse, Meister Georg Händel, a widower, had celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of his birth six months before the wedding. The bridegroom was the official barber-surgeon of Giebichenstein, a suburb of Halle, where Georg Taust, the bride's father, was the Lutheran pastor.

If a witch or a prophetic fairy had intruded herself upon the wedding-feast, after the fashion of the bent old woman in many a German folk-tale, her predictions would have amazed the

company as hugely as anything that witch or fairy has ever foretold about the slaying of giants and the winning of kingdoms. She could have said, without straying from the truth :—

“Two sons will be born to you. The elder will die at his birth. As for the younger, he will live to be one of the seven musical wonders of the world. To-day is a great day for England. It is the feast-day of England’s saint, the stout St. George. Also, it is both the birthday and the death-day of Shakespeare, England’s greatest man. And it will be in England that your young son will grow up to the stature of a giant, dwarfing all the English musicians who have gone before him and filling the whole stage of English music for more than a hundred years. He himself will turn Englishman. More. These things will come to pass under a German Elector of Hanover reigning in London as the English king.”

Had some such prophecy as this, been flung at the astounded Meister Georg, the mention of music would not have been the least stupefying of its incredible items. Unlike Bach’s, Meister Georg’s family had never reckoned music among

its gifts and graces. Meister Georg was an estimable citizen, whose industry and skill in plying cold steel had already won him Court appointments. Poor Dorothea was clear-minded, pious, dutiful, and so earnest that she had "little wish for marriage, even in the bloom of her youth." But neither bride nor bridegroom is recorded to have shown any musical leanings whatsoever.

On 24 February, 1685, the couple's second-born son, then just one day old, was borne to the Liebfrauenkirche, where he received the names of Georg Friedrich. At the time of this baptism, Lully was upon the heights of his fame and power, Purcell was entering upon the last and most brilliant decade of his short life, and Bach was still unborn.

As the tower of the Liebfrauenkirche was not far from the roomy house where his childhood was passed, it is probable that the first melodies the little Handel heard were the chorales intoned at evening by the great bells. These clean-cut melodies, descending from the plainchant hymnody, surely helped to endow the child with those qualities of expressiveness and



HANDEL.

From Thomson's Engraving after the Painting at Windsor Castle.

clearness, combined with solidity, which characterize all his best work. It was also probably from the bells that he received the hoard of definite musical phrases with which he so grandly enriched his own inventions, such as the lordly phrase at the words, "The kingdoms of this world" in the "Hallelujah Chorus."

No toys could long please the tiny Georg save toy-drums and toy-trumpets, toy-flutes and toy-horns. For a time his old father indulged him. But the course of music did not long run smooth. His boy was intended for the law, and fearing that he might be drawn away into the somewhat disrespectable ranks of the professional musicians, Meister Georg took the extreme step of forbidding music altogether. "Music," the barber-surgeon condescended to admit, was "an elegant art and a fine amusement; yet, if considered as an occupation, it had little dignity, as having for its subject nothing better than mere entertainment." He went on to announce that he would have "no more jingling"; and, making good his words, he not only purged his own home of all musical instruments, but also charged his son not to enter any house contain-

ing "such kind of furniture." Worse. Even the grammar-school to which the boy would naturally have been sent was to be shunned, because music was taught therein. No wonder that some one grimly recommended the cutting-off of the unhappy little fellow's fingers !

In all concerns save this, Georg Friedrich was an obedient child. But he was no more capable of ceasing to be musical than of changing himself from a boy to a girl. And at last relief came. Some kind body helped him to smuggle a little clavichord into an attic. Its compass was narrow and its tone weak and thin. In the pretty German phrase, it yielded only "Mouse-Music." Nevertheless, it served Georg Friedrich's turn, and his "Mouse-Music" prepared the way for those masterpieces in which he thunders on like leviathan storming through great waters. But, according to a credible anecdote, Meister Georg at last became conscious of the ghostly tinklings which floated about the house at night, like the sighings of an Æolian harp ; and when, lantern in hand, he mounted to the attic, the secret was out. Tradition is silent as to the immediate sequel.

A year or two before Handel's birth, Halle had ceased to be the seat of a princely house. But, only forty miles away, the Duke of Sächse-Weissenfels lived in some state, and maintained a ducal "chapel." Having a relative in the ducal service, Meister Georg arranged to pay him a visit. His little son, whose fancy had been fired by all he had heard of the court-music, pleaded hard to be taken : but Meister Georg was not to be cajoled. On the day appointed the post-chaise rumbled forth on its journey ; but when Halle had been left well behind the old man suddenly caught sight of his offspring, who had trotted panting along on foot. Georg junior had naturally to tremble before an explosion of anger : but the end of the affair was that the big Georg and the little Georg continued the journey together.

At Weissenfels the six-year-old is said to have played the organ-voluntary at the end of the Sunday morning service. This can hardly be true. But it is certain that he played on some keyed instrument or other in the hearing of the Duke, who sent for old Georg and at last induced him to promise that young Georg should

be placed at once under a competent musician. And before dismissing the pair the Duke filled the boy's pockets with money.

Zachau, the organist of the Liebfrauenkirche, was the teacher under whom the boy was placed on his return to Halle. Happily Zachau was not an original genius, but simply an all-round and workmanlike musician, who could give his pupil a sound grounding in musical science without being able to blur his artistic individuality. It is pleasant to note that Zachau's widow was materially remembered more than once when her husband's old pupil began to make money in England.

So fast was young Handel's progress that we read of his composing a cantata or some other considerable composition every week. He himself declared in later life that he "used to write like a devil in those days." Yet Meister Georg, who was still determined that law should be the serious business of his son's life, and music only an elegant "extra subject," doggedly compelled the lad to grind away at the mill of classical learning as if music had never existed. Very few hours could have remained for sport or bodily exercise;

but Georg Friedrich's too studious childhood certainly formed in him those habits of hard and continuous work which enabled him to write the *Messiah* in twenty-four days.

By this time Berlin had become a famous musical centre. Two hundred and ten years ago the present seat of the German Emperor and of the Prussian King could boast of no prince greater than an Elector. Yet many of the most renowned musicians in Europe flocked to its Court. And about 1696 there arrived one who was to overshadow them all. It was the eleven-year-old Handel, to whom Zachau had already imparted his whole stock of musical lore.

Among the celebrities who beset the art-loving Elector and his accomplished consort were two Italian musicians, who were fated to cross Handel's path again under another sky. These were Attilio Ariosti, a Dominican monk, and Giambattista Buononcini, a composer bred and born. Ariosti welcomed the brilliant youngster from Halle without a spark of jealousy and helped him like a true artist. But Buononcini, who had inhaled from infancy the atmosphere of petty spites and intrigues which too often fills

the homes of professional musicians, first treated the new-comer with silent contempt and afterwards deliberately tried to humiliate him publicly by setting before him a composition for the harpsichord overflowing with perverse difficulties. Young Handel's prodigious musicianship enabled him to perform the work without a wrong note ; but his triumph only fed the hatred which Buononcini nursed in his heart.

Famous Buononcini notwithstanding, the Elector Friedrich sought the honour of becoming the young prodigy's patron. He offered to pay the expenses of his education in Italy, and ultimately to place him in a post of importance. But Meister Georg, who had already fulfilled his threescore years and ten, was inexorable ; and a way was found of eluding the Prince's goodwill. Young Georg returned to Halle. Indeed so dutiful was he that even his father's death in the following year did not turn him away from the law. Throughout five years he persisted in his classical studies, and in 1702 entered the newly-founded University of Halle as a law-student. He matriculated in February. But in March an ill wind blew Handel some good. One Johann

Christoph Leporin, organist of the "Schloss-und-Domkirche," strained to breaking-point the patience of his employers, who had long been scandalized by his laziness and looseness of life. Leporin was dismissed and Handel was appointed in his place.

To be organist of the Schloss-und-Domkirche meant more work than ha'pence. For a stipend of a hundred and fifty shillings a year and a free lodging the gay Leporin's successor was required to look after the repair of the organ ; to play on all Sundays and festivals and to choose, arrange or compose music for all the proper psalms and cantatas throughout the year ; to live in peace with the clergy and church officers ; and to edify Halle by a godly life. As the Schloss-und-Domkirche was the meeting-house of the Calvinists, while Handel had been straitly reared as a Lutheran, the new organist's path was not without its thorns and pitfalls. But there were compensations. The Schloss-und-Domkirche organ was one of the finest in the world. Its huge bellows supplied, at one filling, enough wind for "the entire creed or 180 bars of measured music." The instrument was gorgeously deco-

rated and is said to have been sixty-two feet high by twenty broad. Furthermore, his duties as a whole were so congenial to Handel that he voluntarily formed extra bands of singers and instrumentalists, recruiting them from his old schoolfellows.

But towards the end of his year of probation the Schloss-und-Domkirche was probably better pleased with Handel than was Handel with the Schloss-und-Domkirche. He had composed "some hundreds of cantatas," which have been lost, and he seems to have felt that Halle was too small for his powers. Accordingly he set out for Hamburg at the beginning of 1703.

Hamburg was the stronghold of Reinhard Keiser, the first musician to compose operas entirely in the German language. At the theatre or opera-house, which had existed just twenty-five years at the time of his arrival, Handel obtained a post as *ripieno*, second violin. As the *ripieno* instruments only played in the loudest and fullest passages they were generally entrusted to the less talented performers; so that, on the face of it, the ex-organist of the Schloss-und-Domkirche had come down in the world. But his own modesty

was to blame. According to Johann Mattheson, the leading tenor of the opera-house, Handel “behaved as if he did not know how to count five”; and it was only when he was suddenly called upon to take the place of an absent harpsichord-player that Hamburg found out the stuff whereof he was made.

It is to the pen of the mean and bumptious Mattheson that we owe the following account of Handel’s strange pilgrimage to the home of the very great organist and composer Buxtehude :—

On the 17th of August in that same year, 1703, we travelled together to Lübeck and made double fugues in the coach, *da mente* not *da penna*. I had been invited thither by the Geheimer Rathspräsident, Magnus von Wedderkopp, as successor to the excellent Organist Dieterich Buxtehude, and I took Händel with me. We played on almost every Organ and Harpsichord in the place; and with regard to our performances, agreed between ourselves that he should only play upon the Organ and I upon the Harpsichord. We listened also to the veteran performer [Buxtehude] in the Marienkirche with deep attention. But because the question of succession involved also that of a marriage contract, into which we neither of us had the slightest desire to enter, we left the place after receiving many compliments,

unusual honours, and very pleasant entertainment. Johann Christian Schieferdecker afterwards brought the affair to a more satisfactory conclusion ; accepted the bride after the death of her father in 1707, and obtained the coveted appointment.

As the forlorn Miss Buxtehude counted thirty-four years to Handel's eighteen, his lack of enthusiasm would not have been surprising even in a marrying man. But Handel was an incorrigible bachelor. Rumour thrice betrothed him ; the first time to Vittoria Tesi, in Italy ; the second time to an English damsel, whose mamma's indignation at the match drove the lover away in disgust ; and the third time to a wealthy Englishwoman who demanded that he should cease to practise in the musical profession. But there is no evidence that Rumour spoke the truth.

For Holy Week of 1704 Handel wrote a *Passion Oratorio* which, after being lost for more than a century, was first published about fifty years ago. But both Mattheson and Handel aspired to opera. Mattheson, as the older and more influential man, naturally secured the first innings, and his *Cleopatra* was produced in the autumn, with Handel in the orchestra at the harpsichord,

and Mattheson himself on the stage as Antony. But Mattheson's petty and fussy nature soon stirred up trouble. Having died upon the stage as Antony about half an hour before the fall of the curtain, he wished to come to life again in the orchestra, and play the harpsichord during the last dying speech and confession of Cleopatra. Handel, however, persisted in playing to the end ; and Mattheson, on leaving the theatre, turned and gave his friend a box on the ear. The spectators of this insult promptly formed a ring outside the opera-house for the inevitable duel ; and so hot was Mattheson's onslaught that if he had not broken his wretched sword against a big button of metal on Handel's coat, the world would have had to do without *Rinaldo* and *Teseo*, and without the *Messiah* and *Samson* and *Theodora*.

Honour being satisfied, the combatants dined together on 30 December, 1704 ; and on 8 January, 1705, Handel's first opera came to hearing. It was called *Almira* ; and, with Mattheson in the principal part, it made a tremendous hit. That the music was notable is proved by the fact that it included the wonderful sarabande familiar

to every singer in association with the words from *Rinaldo* (in which opera Handel used it over again): "Lascia ch' io pianga." The run of *Almira* continued till its successor *Nero* was ready. *Nero*, like Handel's two other Hamburg operas, *Florinda* and *Daphne*, is lost; but it was so sumptuously mounted and warmly received that its young author was able not only to repay the sums lent him by his mother, but also to put by nearly two hundred ducats.

Mightily pleased with *Almira*, the Prince of Tuscany came forward with a scheme for taking the composer to study in Italy. But with two hundred ducats in his locker the young man could afford to be independent, and accordingly he set off for Italy on his own account. It is said that he left behind him two large chests full of compositions in MS. which were afterwards lost. If this be true, it is a fact of capital importance as regards the hotly argued question of Handel's alleged wholesale thievings in later life from the works of other composers. At the time of his Italian journey it must be remembered that Handel was equal to the invention of such lovely and finely expressed melodies as the sara-

bande in *Almira*, which no sane person has ever accused him of stealing. Seeing that the composers from whom Handel is said to have thieved were mostly his contemporaries, and that they remained silent under their wrongs, it is at least conceivable that the true and full history of the scattered leaves from Handel's chests would make strange reading.¹

On his way to the Alps, Handel seems to have halted at Halle to spend Christmas with his family. Then he pushed southward through the snows to Florence and to Rome. In the Eternal

¹ The writer does not maintain that Handel is entitled to a verdict of "Not Guilty"; but, after reading all that the prosecution has put into print, he contends that a jury could not justly arrive at anything worse than "Not Proven." Dr. Sedley Taylor's recent *Indebtedness of Handel to other Composers*, with its quarto pages filled with "deadly parallels," has a formidable look; but his argument too often proceeds by hops, skips, and jumps. According to sound rules of evidence, Urio, Clari, Erba, Stradella, Muffat, and the other writers from whom Handel is said to have borrowed, must stand the fires of textual and historical criticism before their printed editions and MSS. can be admitted in a damaging sense. Some of these personages are practically unknown. Mr. Arthur Balfour hit off their unimportance very neatly when he said that "Handel did not cheat them out of fame, but cheated them into it." The traditional biography of Stradella has turned out to be romantic moonshine. Even Handel's commonplace book in the Fitzwilliam Museum, which is the most damaging document in the plaintiff's dossier, will not support the weight of argument based upon it. Probably a striking personal experience of Dr. Prout (retold in Dr. Sedley Taylor's book) shook that admirable scholar out of his judicial calmness, and thus gave a fillip to the plaintiff's case:

City he had opportunities of still further dignifying his style by hearing the writings *a capella* of the Roman masters. Returning northwards he captivated Florence with his new opera *Rodrigo*. Later on, he stormed Venice with his *Agrippina*, which made the audience shout "Long live the Saxon!" and to behave "like a company of madmen." At Venice, Domenico Scarlatti is said to have heard Handel strum a harpsichord at a masked ball, and to have exclaimed, "That must be either the Saxon or the Devil!"

Altogether the Saxon spent nearly four years in Italy. Princes and Cardinals heaped honours upon him. Lotti, the Scarlattis, and other fine musicians became his fast friends. From the opera-houses of Florence and Venice, of Rome and Naples, he reaped rich rewards. Better still, he acquired therein the one thing which his musicianship had lacked—the art of writing skilfully for the human voice. He quitted Italy in 1710, no doubt leaving behind him countless memories of his improvisations upon the organ and harpsichord for the benefit of the minor Italian composers, from whom he was afterwards to steal his own ideas. It is also certain that

in Rome he wrote down many works of which the MSS. are lost.

Passing through Hanover, Handel obtained the post of Kapellmeister to the Elector George, afterwards George I of England. His salary was 1500 ducats a year. It was understood that he could forthwith enjoy a reasonable furlough for the rounding off of his European tour. Accordingly he journeyed through Holland to England, reaching London two or three weeks before the shortest day of 1710.

France with her Lully, Italy with her Monteverde and his successors, and Germany with her Keiser, had each a national opera in the vernacular: but the lamentable death of Purcell had cut down English opera before it was old enough to walk. Only a few months before Handel's arrival, out-and-out Italian opera with Italian singers had been imported into London and this "irrational and exotic entertainment," as Dr. Johnson afterwards called it, became the rage. It was in vain that Addison, the champion of a vernacular theatre, launched his epigram against the amateurs who, "tired with only understanding half the piece, found it more convenient

not to understand any." Knowing that the famous Mr. Handel was come to town fresh from his Italian triumphs, Aaron Hill, the director of the Haymarket, drew upon Tasso for a libretto and straightway engaged one Rossi to turn it into Italian verse, and Handel to furnish it with music. So strenuously did the musician fall to work that he had repeatedly to spur on the poet for further supplies of words. The result was *Rinaldo*.

General hearers of Handel's sacred works often wonder why his operas are never performed, although half a dozen of his oratorios survive in the modern repertory. Evangelical writers have rushed in with the answer that Handel's genius only awoke to full life when he "abandoned the licentious mythology of Greece and Rome and consecrated his pen to the cause of religion." But the true explanation lies in the almost incredible artificiality of the Italian operatic form into which Handel was forced to cramp and distort his inventions. Its restrictions have been so well summarized by Rockstro that his words may usefully be transcribed here.¹

W. S. Rockstro's *Life of Handel* (London, 1883), pp. 62 ff.

The Poet was not even permitted to use his own judgment with regard to the members of his *Dramatis Personæ*; nor could the Composer distribute his voices in accordance with any other scheme than that laid down by law. The strict rule demanded the employment of six principal characters only—three Women and three Men. A fourth Man was indeed admissible in cases of necessity; and a Woman was sometimes permitted to take a Man's part—especially if she had a deep-toned voice of masculine character: but these indulgences were not very frequently claimed. The First Woman (*Prima Donna*) was always a high Soprano; the Second or Third a Contralto. The First Man (*Primo uomo*) was an artificial Soprano; and it was indispensable that he should appear as the hero of the piece, though the rôle assigned to him might be that of Ajax or Julius Cæsar. The second Man, if not a Soprano like the first, was an artificial Contralto. The Third was either another Contralto, or, more rarely, a Tenor.

When a Fourth Man was needed he could be a Tenor or even a Bass. But in many of Handel's operas, including the magnificent *Teseo*, there was neither Tenor, Baritone nor Bass. Each of the six principals claimed the right to sing at least one air in each of the three acts of the piece. But the composer was not free to

impose upon them such airs as musical and dramatic fitness demanded. The airs were of five approved kinds ; and two airs of the same kind were never allowed in succession. There was generally a grand duet : but other concerted pieces were forbidden and the Chorus (for the principals only) was often confined to the finale of the third act.

In later life, Handel often broke loose from one or other of these fetters, notably by employing a tenor instead of an artificial soprano as the hero ; but even when he wrenched his wrists free he was still chained at the ankles. Hence his works for the stage never became music-dramas. They were no more than musical and spectacular entertainments, in which a frail thread of undramatically told story held together a bundle of long recitatives and long, long songs showily sung by an overpaid crew of jealous and vain virtuosi. Yet, despite the fact that Handel's Italian operas are dead as wholes, there are parts of them which are as green as Christmas mistletoe hanging high amid the leafless branches of a blackened oak.¹

¹ The writer cannot agree with Mr. J. A. Fuller-Maitland (in *The Oxford History of Music*, Vol. IV, p. 204) that the valuable songs in

Rinaldo is so rich in beauties that its triumph was immediate and overwhelming. The management spared no expense to give it a good send-off. For example, during Almirena's song in Armida's enchanted garden, great numbers of living birds were let loose upon the stage. But even without the "sparrows," as Addison called them in disgust, *Rinaldo* was sure of success by virtue of its melodies, which included the well-known march, the air, "Lascia ch' io pianga" (already mentioned as a sarabande in the Hamburg *Almira*), the hero's song "Cara Sposa," which Handel himself looked upon as the best he ever wrote, and "Il tricerbero umiliato," which was bawled at thousands of eighteenth-century drinking-bouts to the words "Let the waiter bring clean glasses." The public rushed so eagerly to buy copies of the *Rinaldo* songs that Walsh, the publisher, made fifteen hundred pounds, thus prompting Handel to suggest that Walsh should compose the next opera and leave to Handel the more lucrative task of publishing it.

Handel's forty-two operas are "very few." Even the unsatisfactory selection published at a low price by the late W. T. Best (who omits *Ombra mai fù*, one of the loveliest movements in all music) will convince most readers to the contrary.

Meanwhile the Elector George must have been thinking that his new Kapellmeister's holiday had lasted long enough ; and Handel returned to Hanover after an absence of six months. But London called to him in a voice that would not be denied, and in the autumn of 1712 he once more took shipping for England, having obtained leave of absence on the distinct understanding that he would resume his duties "within a reasonable time." As everybody knows, the reasonable time stretched out so long that the Elector George rejoined Handel in England before Handel showed any disposition to rejoin the Elector George in Hanover.

In thanksgiving for that doubtful blessing called the Peace of Utrecht, Queen Anne went over the head of John Eccles, her English-born musician-laureate, and commanded Handel to write the official *Te Deum*. The alien rose to the occasion and produced his grand *Utrecht Te Deum and Jubilate* ; whereupon Queen Anne endowed him with £200 a year for life. But this happy-go-lucky serving of two masters and drawing of two salaries could not last for ever. The Elector George grew restive, partly because

his Kapellmeister was taking a disrespectful advantage of his good-nature, and chiefly because the Peace of Utrecht was most objectionable to the House of Hanover. Handel seems to have counted on having plenty of time for repentance and good works; but, in 1714, Queen Anne died unexpectedly, and, seven weeks later, Handel's wrathful master landed at Greenwich as King of England.

It must have been a bitter moment for Handel. Had he played his cards better, he would have accompanied the King to his new dominions as one of the brightest ornaments of his train. There was nothing for it but to give the Court a wide berth; and although he was only a barber-surgeon's son, Handel had already come to regard the patronage of princes as his natural right. But he had powerful friends. His home was at Burlington House, on the site of the present Royal Academy, where his host, the Earl of Burlington, played Mæcenas so pleasantly that Handel abode with him for three years.

Seven years earlier, during his first visit to Venice, Handel had won the admiring friendship

of the Baron Kielmansegge. It fell out that the Baron came over with the Elector George to England, and he soon began to plot and scheme with Lord Burlington for Handel's restoration to the kingly favour. The opportunity came one August evening when the Royal Family were returning by water from Limehouse to Whitehall. In those days the Thames above London Bridge was a living highway, and countless boats followed the procession along its torchlit course. At last the King became conscious of sweet sounds proceeding from a craft which was pressing the royal barge as closely as good manners allowed. In addition to a full band of strings, two solo violins, a flute, a piccolo, two hautboys, a bassoon, two horns, and two trumpets were well at work. After playing a ringing fugue, the musicians went on to a brilliant series of dance-movements, including a sailor's hornpipe. King George eagerly inquired who the author of this charming surprise might be, and, on hearing from the lips of Baron Kielmansegge that it was his penitent old Kapellmeister Handel, he forgave him on the spot. This *Water-Music* is seldom heard, and it is



HANDEL AND KING GEORGE THE FIRST.
After Edward Hamman.

a pity that no enthusiasts have been found to perform it upon the River Thames on the anniversary of its first hearing. The London County Council might make a worse use of one of its many spare steamboats than to load it with one of the Council orchestras on a warm August night, thus allowing hundreds of thousands of people to hear a most noble music in the conditions for which it was designed.

To save everybody's face an excuse had to be found for bringing back Handel to the Court. Geminiani, one of the many Italian musicians who behaved to the German with a handsomeness rarely shown by Italian "professionals" in our own day, solved the problem by protesting that the aid of Handel at the harpsichord was essential to the effect of some music he had been commanded to play. As soon as the truant found himself in the Presence he expressed sufficient contrition ; and he left the palace the richer by an additional pension of £200 a year. A little later, when the King returned for six months to Hanover, he took Handel with him, and thus the reconciliation was complete.

Meanwhile the Duke of Chandos, who had

piled up a suspiciously large fortune as Paymaster of the Forces under Marlborough, was finishing his palace of Cannons, near Edgeware, nine miles north-west of London. Here he lived in upstart ostentation. The blocks of marble in his grand staircase were over twenty feet long, and he rode to church on Sundays with a retinue of a hundred guards. But he was a friend of art ; and it was as his master-musician that Handel wrote much good music, including his first oratorio *Esther*, and his ever-young *Acis and Galatea*, with its familiar songs “ Love in her eyes sits playing,” and “ O ruddier than the cherry ! ” While at Cannons he also published his *Suites de Pieces pour le Clavecin*, containing the immortal movement known as *The Harmonious Blacksmith*. Handel himself entitled this world-famous piece simply *Air et Doubles* ; but there is a persistent tradition that it was suggested to him by the blows on an anvil while he was taking shelter from the rain in a roadside smithy near Cannons. The anvil in question now belongs to Mr. Maskelyne, the conjurer, and when struck yields the notes B and E,¹ which are the domi-

¹ According to the pitch used in Handel's time.

nant and tonic of the key in which the piece is written.

In 1719 the South Sea Bubble orbled so big and bright that everybody was for speculation. Among the many new joint-stock companies was "The Royal Academy of Music," with a capital of £50,000, subscribed by royal and noble personages. The aim of the promoters was the revival of Opera on a sound commercial and artistic basis. For some years this form of art had languished in England. MacSwiney, the impresario who produced *Teseo*, the fine opera with which Handel followed up *Rinaldo*, had run away to evade imprisonment for debt. But the managers of the new Academy went confidently to work. They appointed as musical directors Handel, Buononcini, and Ariosti—the three composers who had already been so strangely associated in Berlin. To Handel was confided a delicate mission to the opera-houses of Germany, with the aim of begging, borrowing, or stealing the pick of the Italian singers.

At Düsseldorf, at Dresden, and elsewhere, Handel collected a sufficient number of the petted creatures whose jealousies and greeds were

to trouble so many of his after days. Of course, he visited Halle. So eager was the desire of Bach, who was at Anhalt-Köthen, to see his brother composer, that he set out at once to meet him. But Bach only reached Halle to find that Handel had started for England a few hours before. Thus these two wonders of the world never met in the flesh.

The new Academy got into full swing with Handel's *Radamisto*. In their fierce determination to hear this opera, people fought at the doors of the theatre. Many ladies were carried out fainting, and others had their dresses torn to ribbons. But although *Radamisto* and succeeding works from the same quill caused excitement, Buononcini's far slighter and less original operas drew an even larger public. At last the expected happened. Leaders of fashion formed two camps, with the two composers' names as watchwords. Broadly speaking, the Tories declared for Handel and the Whigs for Buononcini. It was in ridicule of these factions that Byrom scribbled the two lines which are still so useful to shallow critics of controversies too deep for their own poor understandings :—

Strange all this difference should be
'Twixt Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

The singers caused poor Handel more trouble still. The ugly Francesca Cuzzoni was so little of an artist that she refused to sing the beautiful "Falsa Immagine" which the composer had introduced into *Ottone* expressly on her account ; and it was only after Handel had roared out that she was "a she-devil," and that he, being "Beelzebub, the Prince of Devils," intended to throw her out of the window, that she gave way. As for Senesino, the artificial soprano, when a bit of machinery fell upon the stage during a performance of *Giulio Cesare*, he broke down and began to cry, although he had just been singing the song "Cæsar does not know what fear is." Yet each of these creatures received £2000 for the season, and at Cuzzoni's benefit certain seats were sold for fifty guineas each.

By Act of Parliament Handel became a naturalized Englishman early in 1726. It is noteworthy that his first opera after this event was *Scipione*, which begins with the march so dear to many a generation of English soldiers. For *Alessandro*, *Scipione's* successor, the Academy engaged the beautiful singer Faustina as well as Cuzzoni. In writing his music, Handel did his utmost to

prevent a breach of the peace between the two goddesses, assigning arias of equal importance to them both all through the score. But the baser sort of opera-goers fomented strife, and so unseemly became the behaviour of the contending partisans that the Academy's better patrons began to regard the Opera as less of a pleasure than a pain.

Thus weakened, the Academy was finding it increasingly difficult to pay the inflated salaries of the principals, when an event occurred which hurried them to utter ruin. Gay's *Beggars' Opera* drew to the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields the lewd remnant of opera-goers whom the Handel-Buononcini and Cuzzoni-Faustina brawls had not already driven away. *The Beggars' Opera*, however high may have been its didactic aim, was not run after for its satiric gospel but for its coarse portrayal of low life, and for the dozens of catchy tunes which Dr. Pepusch had calmly lifted not only from the treasures of old English folk-song and from the works of dead composers, such as Purcell, but also from Handel's own operas, especially *Rinaldo*. *The Beggars' Opera* ran for sixty-three nights; Miss Fenton, who

played the part of Polly Peachum, married a duke ; and altogether, the public preoccupation was so complete that the Royal Academy of Music closed its doors, and the Italians took themselves off to two rival theatres in Venice.

Meanwhile George II had ascended the throne. For his coronation Handel wrote the lordly sequence of anthems beginning with *Zadok the Priest*. Pensions totalling £600 a year having been confirmed to him, Handel boldly took the King's Theatre on his own account, and set out for Italy to collect a new troop of singers. On the way home he paid a filial visit to his blind and very aged mother, and once more failed to keep a suggested appointment with Bach.

Artistically, Handel's operatic venture was magnificent ; but it was not business. When *The Beggars' Opera* and its imitations grew stale, people did not return in sufficient numbers to their first love. Most of the singers treated Handel shabbily. For instance, the contemptible Senesino, who had once been publicly caned for his insolence to the gentle English singer, Anastasia Robinson, deserted to Buononcini's rival Opera or "The Opera of the Nobility"—a ven-

ture which cost its backers £12,000 and ruined Handel into the bargain. As for the singer Carestini, this "dog," as Handel called him to his face, actually declined to sing the lovely "Verdi Prati" in *Alcina*, although the event proved that it was a song of songs for his voice.

To stave off the nearing disaster Handel made experiments in the direction of oratorios. *Esther* and *Deborah* were successfully performed; also *Acis and Galatea*, which was advertised as follows :—

There will be no action on the Stage, but the Scene will represent, in a picturesque manner, a rural prospect, with rocks, groves, fountains and grottos, among which will be disposed a Chorus of Nymphs and Shepherds, the habits and every other decoration suited to the subject.

These essays were acceptable to his patrons; but, instead of following them up on a large scale, Handel doggedly produced opera after opera until, in 1737, the crash came. At the age of fifty-two he found himself worse than penniless; for he was forced to give bills (every penny of which he paid in the long run) to his

creditors. The husband of Signora Strada, his *prima donna*, refused to take a bill, and sought to fling Handel into prison. Broken in health he retired to the sulphur springs of Aix-la-Chapelle.

But the Saxon was made of stern stuff. His indomitable courage did even more than the ancient waters to renew his health and spirits. In November he was again in London, wooing fresh disappointments at the new Opera of his old partner Heidegger. Had he accepted the suggestion of his enlightened friend, Aaron Hill, the begetter of *Rinaldo*, he would have written his later operas to English libretti as he did his oratorios; and in this way both he and English Opera might have made their fortunes. He persisted, however, in using Italian texts. In *Serse* he made concessions by admitting scenes of broad comedy. But it was all in vain. In spite of the King's patronage and presence, so scanty were the audiences that, even on one of the oratorio evenings, Lord Chesterfield explained his early departure from the theatre by saying that he did not like disturbing His Majesty's privacy.

As Signora Strada's husband persisted in his plan of throwing Handel into the debtors' prison,

the proud Saxon was at length compelled to accept something resembling charity in the shape of a "benefit" concert. The public swung round in his favour at last, and the benefit brought him at least £800. When the entirely unmusical Alexander Pope, who had been snubbed by Handel, was asked why he had praised Handel in his *Dunciad*, he answered handsomely, "that merit in every branch of science ought to be encouraged; that the extreme illiberality with which many persons had joined to ruin Handel called forth his indignation; and that, though nature had denied his being gratified by Handel's uncommon talents in the musical line, yet when his powers were generally acknowledged he thought it incumbent on him to pay a tribute due to genius." Seeing that the world has riveted round the sickly Pope's poor neck a reputation for meanness and spite, his words stand in refreshing contrast with the ignorant and clumsy attack which the comfortable Horace Walpole made upon Handel when he was down.

A further proof of England's slowly awakening esteem for Handel was the unveiling of his statue in Vauxhall Gardens. This statue (illus-

trated on the next leaf by a reproduction of Bartolozzi's print) was by Roubiliac, who also carved Handel's monument in Westminster Abbey. But opera languished more and more. Heidegger failed. The public preferred *The Dragon of Wantley* (a parody of Handel's *Giustino*), in which Handel's own cook Waltz played the part of the Dragon. With *Deidamia*, his thirty-eighth Italian opera, Handel finally retired from a field where he had planted wheat and vines and harvested mainly tares and thistles.

Meanwhile his oratorios had been growing in number and in fame. *Saul*, the earliest of Handel's first-rank works in this form, and *Israel in Egypt*, which some people consider the greatest, were three years old when *Deidamia* was born. But not until he had broken with Italian opera did Handel set about the work which is not only by far the most popular, but also by far the greatest oratorio in the world. He began the *Messiah* on a day of happy memories—22 August, 1741, the twenty-sixth anniversary of his reconciliation with George I to the strains of the *Water-Music* on the sparkling Thames. He finished it on 12 September.

Not counting a scratch rehearsal at Chester,¹ where adverse winds delayed the sailing of the packet, this most English oratorio was first sung on Irish soil. It speaks well for the culture of old Dublin that the Irish were quicker to perceive its supreme quality than were the English. Handel's good friend, Charles Jennens, who so skilfully arranged the passages from Holy Scripture which constitute the *Messiah* libretto, wrote that the composer had "made a fine entertainment of it, though not near so good as he might and ought to have done." And Jennens was not alone in his dullness. But the *Messiah* soon made its way to the height from which it can never be dethroned.

The utmost musical worth of the *Messiah* is generally concealed from modern ears by "the additional accompaniments" provided by Mozart and others. Mozart's interference was justified by the fact that there was no organ in the hall

¹ Dr. Burney, then a fifteen-year-old scholar of the Chester King's School, saw Handel on this occasion. He relates how one Janson, a printer, broke down so badly during the rehearsal at the Golden Falcon that Handel "let loose his great bear upon him, and, after swearing in four or five languages, cried out in broken English: 'You scoundrel! Did not you tell me that you could sing at sight?' 'Yes, sir,' said the printer, 'and so I can; but not at first sight.'"



THE STATUE OF HANDEL IN VAUXHALL GARDENS.

After Bartolozzi's Engraving.

at Vienna where the work was to be performed ; but the embellishments of some later editors almost drive a musician to imitate the gentleman who stayed away from a performance "with additional accompaniments" on the ground that he had "always considered the *Messiah* quite long enough already." It is only on paper that Handel's orchestration looks bald. The common chords for the strings at the outset of "Comfort ye" achieve their end as fully as the recondite harmonies of the widely subdivided instruments in the garden scene of *Tristan und Isolde*, and the first entry of the trumpets in "Glory to God" is more stirring than all the blare of brass in the Triumph-music of *Aida*. As for the choruses, they are equal to the masterpieces of Palestrina in the melodiousness of their part-writing ; and they have an advantage over Palestrina in that their melodiousness is of a kind so grateful to the universal ear that even untrained hearers can listen rapt to one choral fugue after another without suspecting that the resounding onrush of crystal-clear music has for its channel that very art-form which is commonly supposed to be the driest of the dry.

But the *Messiah* does not live by music alone. Christian faith and hope and charity abide in its pages. Burgh's assertion that Handel was found sobbing while he was at work on "He was despised" may not be accurate; but the spirit in which Handel accomplished his task is shown by his answer to Lord Kinnoul's compliments on the "noble entertainment." He said: "My lord, I should be sorry if I only entertained them. I wish to make them better." And of the mood in which he wrote the "Hallelujah Chorus," he said: "I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God Himself." Nor did Handel stop short at mere ecstasies and pious rejoinders. Badly as he needed money, the profits (£400) of the first performance in Dublin were divided among the poor, the sick, and the unhappy wretches in gaol for debt. It was also the *Messiah* which earned for the Foundling Hospital £7000 during the composer's lifetime, and much more after his death. And it is beyond dispute that, like the great churches of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the great altar-pieces of the fifteenth and sixteenth, Handel's *Messiah*, produced amidst the bleak

deism of the eighteenth, has declared the prime truths of Christianity to hundreds of thousands who would suffer them from no other preacher.

Within seven weeks of finishing the epic *Messiah*, Handel had also finished the dramatic *Samson*—or, to be precise, he had wrought it as far as the sublime dirge, leaving “Let the bright seraphim” and the concluding chorus to be added a year later. During an almost incredibly short space he also completed the huge *Dettingen Te Deum*, and the oratorios *Joseph*, *Belshazzar*, *Semele*, and *Hercules*, as well as music for Vauxhall Gardens, some of which he cheerfully admitted to be rather poor stuff. But his industry availed him little. To counteract the revulsion in his favour, Handel’s few but active enemies did all they could to keep the public away from his oratorios, even going to the length of giving card-parties and routs in Lent on Handel’s oratorio evenings. Their vicious enmity triumphed, and Handel became bankrupt a second time.¹

¹ Buononcini himself had left England in disgrace, having been detected in plagiarism. The fact that plagiarism was recognized as a grave offence has not been sufficiently pondered by those who accuse Handel of having stolen right and left from his wide-awake contemporaries.

But he plodded on. *Judas Maccabæus*, *Alexander Balus*, *Joshua*, *Solomon*, *Susanna*, *Theodora*, and *Jephthah* completed the list of his dramatic oratorios. With the exception of *Judas* these works are rarely heard, although they make far livelier hearing than three-fourths of the more recent compositions which choral societies prefer. *Solomon* contains a movement — the so-called “Nightingale Chorus” — which astonishes musician and layman alike. As in the *Saul* “Dead March,” Handel in this delicious chorus attains the most wonderful of ends by the simplest of means. As for *Theodora*, which was so badly neglected even in Handel’s lifetime that “there was room enough to dance” when it was performed, it is filled full with dramatic force and musical beauty. Everybody knows *Theodora*’s song, “Angels ever bright and fair”; but *Theodora* contains very many very much finer pages.

Nowadays Handel is known to the general public only by the oratorios composed between 1739 and 1742, and by two dozen or so of fragments chipped out from his whole remaining life’s work. Hence his vast range as a musician is not

grasped, and it is a common thing to hear people say that they do not persist in exploring their Handel because of his dreary wastes of sameness. It is true that his works resemble one another by reason of a strongly marked style, and, unhappily, by an excess of mannerisms. None the less, Handel's achievement must be reckoned as among the most extensive and most richly furnished in musical literature. In perusing his works the reader is amazed by the sum-total of Handel's first-rate melodic inventions and by the inexhaustible variety of his accompanying figures. Even in his much-abused arias of the Scarlatti type, with a contrasted middle-section and an indolent *Da Capo*, he redeems himself time after time by some happy stroke.

Those who believe that depth involves obscurity, and that only a man with a ponderous gait can have a valuable load upon his head, find Handel glib and empty. But his swift sureness is one of the traits of Handel's genius. As huge as a Titan, he flashes to his mark like bright Apollo. It follows that conductors do him an injustice when they give a lumbering, big-wigged Georgian rendering to his immortal fugues, and,

above all, when they allow certain pet contralto-singers to drag along his noblest phrases as if they are hauling a steam-roller uphill.

After his second bankruptcy, more prosperous days dawned for Handel. He was able to present the Foundling Hospital with a fine organ, and to leave £20,000 behind him when he died. But his last six years were lived in the dark. He who had composed, to the words of blind Milton, that sore lament over his blindness in which Samson cries—

Total Eclipse! No sun, no moon,
All dark amidst the blaze of noon,

himself became entirely blind. But his brave spirit burned on. To the very end he continued to take his place at the harpsichord. Indeed, it was just after directing a performance of the *Messiah* on 6 April, 1859, that his last sickness struck him. For a week he lingered, setting his affairs in order and making codicils to his will. It was Holy Week; and he devoutly expressed a wish that he might die on Good Friday, "in hopes of meeting his good God, his sweet Lord and Saviour, on the Day of His Resurrection."

According to some, his prayer was granted: but, according to others, it was not till the dawn of Holy Saturday that he passed away. His friend, James Smyth, wrote :—

He took leave of all his friends on Friday morning and desired to see nobody but the doctor and apothecary and myself. At seven o'clock in the evening he took leave of me and told me we "should meet again." As soon as I was gone he told his servant not to let me come to him any more, for that he had now done with the world. He died, as he lived, a good Christian, with a true sense of his duty to God and man and in perfect charity with all the world.

From the sorrow at his death there sprang at once that passionate cult of Handel which pre-occupied the musical consciousness of England for many generations. He was buried in Poets' Corner. Although the funeral was supposed to be private, "a vast concourse of persons of all ranks" followed him to the grave. Their grief could hardly have been deeper even if they had known that they were burying English Music as well as the work-weary frame of George Frederick Handel.

BACH

AT the foot of the castled Wartburg, where Tannhäuser scandalized the prudish Minnesingers by his hymn of sacred and profane love, and where Luther hurled his inkpot at the Devil, spreads the Thuringian town of Eisenach. And in Eisenach's Frauenplan, over the broad doorway of a tiled house with dormer windows, stands a tablet marking out the dwelling as the traditional birthplace of John Sebastian Bach.

During a great part of the seventeenth century, the widely branching family called Bach held nearly all the important musical posts throughout Thuringia. Arnstadt, Eisenach, and Erfurt were their principal seats; and so complete was their monopoly in the last-named town that, for long years after they had quitted it, the townsfolk continued to speak of the municipal musicians as "the Bachs." Indeed, the patient researches of German biographers have brought



EISENACH AND THE WARTBURG.

As they appeared during the childhood of Bach. From an Old Print.

to light the names and musical deeds of nearly sixty Bachs, all belonging to the same clan. Once a year there was a reunion at which the clansmen loved to prove their skill by singing several psalm-tunes at one and the same time, along with the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. Conscious of their numbers and of their influence, the Bachs held themselves somewhat aloof from their colleagues, and they do not appear to have supported the praiseworthy College of Instrumental Musicians of Upper and Lower Saxony in its efforts to raise the status of the profession.

In 1645, twins were born to a Bach of Erfurt. The twins were boys ; and even when they grew to man's estate it was almost impossible to tell the one from the other. They thought alike, spoke alike, looked alike, fiddled alike, fell ill alike ; and when one died the other promptly followed his example. It has been gravely recorded that their own wives could not always distinguish them. One of the brothers, John Christopher, had a stormy life. Having walked out and exchanged rings with an Arnstadt damsel named Anna Cunigunda Wiener, he was eventu-

ally called to account by the Consistory for breach of promise, and was so ungallant as to affirm that he "hated the Wienerin so much that" he "could not bear the sight of her. Some years later he quarrelled so roundly with town-musician Gräser that Count Ludwig Günther, his employer, could only settle the dispute by dismissing the combatants in a body. John Christopher was reduced to piping outside the burghers' houses; and although he was at length restored to favour, it is not surprising that he brought up one of his sons to the less fitful profession of a grocer.

Of the other twin, John Ambrose, organist of Eisenach, little is known beyond the one fact which is of supreme account. His wife Elizabeth bore him three sons, each of whom received the name of John, followed by the name of a second saint. The youngest of the three was born on some unrecorded day about the end of March 1685; and on the day when Handel was month old this new-born Bach was baptized a John Sebastian.

Like the young Purcell's, the young Bach's father died before he could mould his son ac-

according to his own musical likeness. The guardianship of the ten-year-old Sebastian was confided to his eldest brother, John Christopher,¹ who was organist at Ohrdruf. Thenceforward Sebastian, although it was presented to him as a kind of hereditary task-work, pursued music no less ardently than the young Handel, for whom it had all the charms of forbidden fruit. But brother Christopher was a stern tutor. He had made a collection, in MS., of the best works of Buxtehude and other contemporary masters. This treasure was kept in a bookcase behind a kind of wire lattice, and Sebastian was denied permission to study it save in the smallest instalments. The boy contrived, however, to work it through the wire and to push it back again before he was detected. This went on night by night for six months, until he had copied out its entire contents by the occasional help of the moon. But John Christopher discovered and harshly confiscated the copy, which did not come back into the scribe's hands until he was a man of thirty-six.

¹ Not to be confounded with the hater of the Wienerin. At least nine John Christopher Bachs are known to the learned.

From the age of fifteen young Bach had to shift for himself. About Easter, 1700, he obtained a modest post as a singer and violinist in the school of St. Michael's Convent at Lüneburg. Böhm, a talented Lüneburg organist with a softer heart than John Christopher's, smoothed the new-comer's path. But a greater than Böhm lived only twenty-five miles away. In Hamburg the gallant and bibulous but musically admirable Reinken played the organ at St. Catherine's.

To the lad, who had coaxed MSS. through wire meshes by moonlight, eight leagues of high-road were not alarming. Young Sebastian trudged off to hear Reinken not once, but often. And on the way home from one of these pilgrimages a miracle befell. Outside an inn between Hamburg and Lüneburg the footsore pilgrim sat down to rest. From the kitchen came the alluring odours of the plentiful dinner about to be served. But he had spent his money on Art, and the odours seemed to be all he was likely to get. Suddenly some one opened a window and pitched out the heads of two herrings. In the hope that something might remain of the

shoulders, the famished Sebastian pounced upon them, and found in the mouth of each fish a Danish ducat. Who had placed them there he could never learn. According to one version of the story, he turned right round and sped back to Hamburg to hear Reinken once more.

At the neighbouring Courts of Celle and of Weimar, Bach was favoured with some sort of a substitute for the Grand Tour which the lucky Handel accomplished in the flesh. At Celle, French compositions, both for the harpsichord and the string-band, were the rage; and at Weimar, where Bach joined the Duke's brother's orchestra, Italian music and musicians were in high favour. His works abound in evidence that he did not move through these circles in vain.

Close to Weimar lay the town of Arnstadt, already mentioned as one of the Bach strongholds. In 1703, by some mismanagement, a Börner and not a Bach was organist of the New Church. But when John Sebastian ran over one day from Weimar to try the new organ, the Consistory made haste to re-establish the traditional order of things. Börner was not deprived

of his salary ; but he was dismissed from his high post, and became a mere deputy to a strippling of eighteen.

But this questionable action brought nobody any very good luck. After little more than two years' service, the young organist could no longer control his desire to visit the revered Buxtehude at Lübeck. This was about sixteen months later than the pilgrimage of Handel and Mattheson to the same shrine, as described in the preceding chapter ; and the unenviable Miss Buxtehude still hung neglected on the stalk. From Arnstadt to Lübeck is two hundred good miles, and it was therefore necessary for Bach to appoint a deputy and to obtain a month's furlough. He arrived at his destination in time for the musical feasts which Buxtehude was wont to spread in his Marienkirche every November and December. But when his month's leave had expired, the organist of Arnstadt still lingered. Some suggest that he was pondering the arguments for and against Miss Buxtehude ; but it is more likely that the lady's papa was the sole attraction. As in the cases of the wire lattice and of the surprising herrings, Bach never counted the cost when his art beckoned him on.

When the truant stole back to Arnstadt in February, the Consistory was more than ready for him. The elders promptly served him with a summons to appear before their potencies, gravities, and reverences. Not content with pounding him from the big gun of his truancy, they bombarded him with every grievance they could rake up. They complained of "his extraordinary variations in the chorales"; of his disdaining rehearsals; of his disagreeing with the scholars; and of his having shown disrespect to the Herr Superintendent's hint that he "played for too long a time" by "going at once quite to the opposite extreme and making it too short." Worse still, they had to complain of a discipline so lax that Rambach, the choir-prefect, had "gone to a wine-cellar last Sunday during the sermon." And they wound up with the formidable sentence :—

Furthermore, ask him by what power he has latterly allowed the strange maiden to appear and to make music in the choir.

Bach eventually answered for "the strange maiden," who was already his cousin, by making her his wife. Respecting certain of the other

charges, the Consistory gave him eight days to frame his reply ; but as he kept silence all the spring, summer, and autumn, they tried sarcasm, and declared that if "the organist Bach . . . feels no shame in drawing the salary, he must also feel no shame at rehearsing with the scholars."

Under so many pin-pricks, "the organist Bach" began to look round for another organ ; and soon after the following Easter he found one at Mühlhausen. The salary was a little over £8 per annum in money, supplemented in kind by three pounds of fish, a dozen bushels of corn, two cords of wood, and six bundles of brushwood. But, of course, the official salary of an organist was only a fraction of his income, which could be largely increased by pupils' fees and by the honoraria at funerals and other functions. The new organist went to work with a will. But the saints at Mühlhausen were no more tolerable than the saints at Arnstadt. There was a militant group of Pietists, who not only dissented from some of the Catholic doctrines retained by Luther, but also denounced the employment of art as a handmaid to religion.



WEIMAR.

As it appeared during the sojourn of Bach. From an Old Print.

Church-music, as practised by Buxtehude and his followers, was hateful and sinful in their eyes. The battle became so hot that the organist, in disgust, broke his professional connexion with the Church and offered his talents to the World.

Bach served the World for fifteen years—nine years under Duke Wilhelm Ernst at Weimar and six years under Prince Leopold at Köthen. At Weimar he laid the foundations of his grander musicianship. Not only was there a fairly good organ in the chapel, but also a small orchestra. Further, Bach had the run of the town music, one of his kinsmen being organist of the town church. The Duke's nephew was both a composer and a violinist, while the Duke himself was a serious and cultivated patron of art.

Leave of absence was more easily obtained from Bach's Dukes and Princes than from his Town-Councils and Consistories. Although little is known of his life at Weimar, records exist of his visits to organ after organ in German towns. At Cassel a princely hearer rewarded his playing with a present of a costly ring, drawn there and then from his own finger. At Leipsic Bach met the Cantor Kuhnau, little knowing that he him-

self was fated to spend the last twenty-seven years of his life as Kuhnau's successor. At Halle, on the death of Handel's old music master Zachau, he competed for the post of organist in the Liebfrauenkirche; but although the fine organ was large beyond his dreams, the salary turned out to be too small. At Dresden he challenged a visitor from Paris, Jean Louis Marchand, to a trial of musical strength; but although Marchand took up the gauntlet, his courage failed him at the last moment, and he slipped away from Dresden by a fast coach at dawn, leaving his challenger, the jury of musicians, and a distinguished audience to wait for him in vain.

Immediately after the renowned Marchand's flight, an event which immensely promoted his triumphant opponent's fame, Prince Leopold, of Anhalt-Köthen, invited Bach into his service. This was in 1717. The Prince took to his new Kapellmeister warmly. In 1718, for instance he and his brother and sister stood as sponsor at the baptism of Bach's seventh child, who was named Leopold after his princely godfather.

Whenever the Prince went to Carlsbad, Bach

and his small orchestra went with him. But from one of these pleasant journeys there was a sad home-coming. His wife, whom he had left in good health, died, and was buried on the eve of his return ; and the news only reached his ears as he was hastening to meet her faithful greetings. Perhaps it was this loss which made him seek a change from Köthen.

At Hamburg, where Reinken, in spite of his ninety-seven years, was still playing at St. Catherine's, a post became vacant at St. James's. The St. James's organ, with its four manuals, pedal, and threescore stops, so tempted Bach that he set down in black and white his willingness to accept the post of organist. But a musical nonentity, a certain Heitmann, bought the place over the heads of all the other candidates for four thousand marks. In taking his bribe the committee impudently resolved :—

That the sale of a post of organist should not become a custom, since it pertained to the service of God ; but if, after election, a person should of his own free will show his gratitude by money payment the Church should not refuse it.

Happily there was at least one honest Lutheran

in Leipsic. One Neumeister, at the close of his Christmas sermon on the Gloria of the angelic hosts near Bethlehem, boldly said that should one of those same angels offer himself as organist at St. James's Church, "if he had no money there would be nothing for him save to fly away again."

But the shabbiness of the elders went a long way. Not only was the best man cheated of his big organ, but the public reading of Bach's letter to the congregation absolved Prince Leopold from fastidious loyalty to the Kapellmeister who had sought to leave him in the lurch. At first all went on as before. Resettling at Köthen, Bach married again about a year and a half after his first wife's death. His second bride, Anna Magdalena Wülken, was the youngest daughter of the Court trumpeter. She had a fine voice, and soon learned enough of music to write out MS. copies, some of which still exist.

But Bach's was not the only marriage at the Court of Köthen. The Prince followed the Kapellmeister's example; and Bach himself has thus described the sequel:—

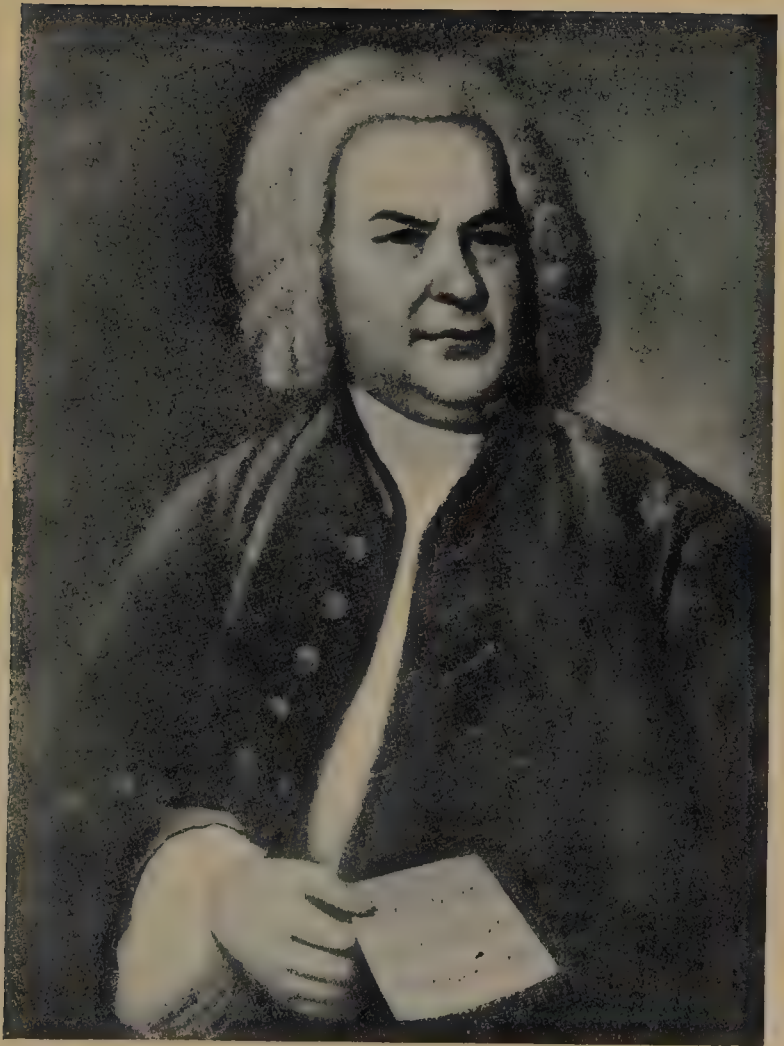
I had there [at Köthen] a gracious, music-loving and discriminating Prince with whom I hoped to

end my days, but it happened that my master married a Bärenburg princess, whose tastes were not in accordance with her lord's. She delighted in gaieties and worldly pleasures, and gradually weaned my master from the loving interest he had always shown towards our glorious art, and so God arranged that the post of Cantor at St. Thomas's School should fall vacant. At first I did not think it becoming to relinquish the dignified office of Kapellmeister for that of a modest Cantor. For this reason, therefore, I took three months to consider the future, and was at last induced to accept, as my sons were inclined to be studious, and I was desirous of affording them an opportunity of gratifying their bent by entering them in the school; and thus, in the name of the Most High, I ventured and came to Leipsic.

When Bach took up his duties in 1722, the Thomasschule was nearly five centuries old. Its endowments comprised fifty-four scholarships for the encouragement of church-music. The School was bound to supply music every Sunday in four churches. The churches of St. Thomas and St. Nicholas were also entitled alternately to a cantata or motet, accompanied by the town orchestra playing with the organ. On four appointed days the Thomas-scholars were further

bound to sing in street processions. Altogether the School might have been a dignified as well as a useful institution. But under an aged Rector, who fought against reforms, it had become a scandal. The masters quarrelled, the boys did pretty much as they pleased, illness was frequent, general studies were neglected, the citizens grew disgusted, and the standard of musical efficiency sank lower and lower. Instead of doing their work, the scholars spent a great deal of their time on the doorsteps of the citizens begging for money, a fixed minimum of their takings being reserved for the precious Rector, Corrector, Cantor, and chief master of Latin. Some of these boys went begging barefoot, and were of notoriously bad character.

Bach's official remuneration was supposed to be about £13 a year, with free residence and sundry allowances of wool, corn, and wine ; but his total income as Cantor mounted up to about £100, which would be equal in purchasing power to about £600 at the present day. Financially he had little to complain of ; and as he was allowed to add his honorary titles as Kapellmeister of Köthen and Kapellmeister of Weissenfels to the



JOHN SEBASTIAN BACH.
After E. Gottlieb Hausmann.

not unimportant title of Thomasschule Cantor, he could hold his own in Leipsic's social life. But Bach was not happy at the School. Disputes were constant. Only two years after his acceptance of the cantorship, he was compelled to memorialize the King of Saxony on sorry points of privileges infringed and perquisites diverted. The Council was perpetually shrewing him. At one time strife raged round the opposing claims of the Cantor of the Thomasschule and the Subdean of St. Nicholas to select the hymns. At another time trouble arose because the Council had appointed the hours from noon to two p.m. for the boys' singing-practice on three days of the week—an arrangement so contemptuous to the sanctity of Bach's German dinner-hour that he began to leave the singing-practice to look after itself. More than once the Council sought to suppress the Cantor's salary; and when this was found impracticable he was punished by the confiscation of sundry extra fees.

Worst of all, the Council persisted in treating their very great man as a very little one. Even when his fame was well established throughout

Germany, they still regarded him as their hired hack. To underline their disrespect they studiously ignored his title of Kapellmeister and would only describe him as Cantor—a discourtesy which would still deeply offend a German, even after the recent preachings of Socialist levellers all over the Fatherland. Nor did the Council merely deny Bach his due styles and titles. They refused him the men and boys and money for the proper discharge of his task. His immortal Passion music was first performed on a scale which the parish church of the tiniest town in England could easily surpass. Sometimes he commanded only two voices for each part. On one occasion the Council, out of pure fussiness, forbade a performance of Passion-music outright; and it was only by setting the Consistory and the Council to quarrel between themselves that Bach could make headway.

Once, when his cup of disgust was brimming over, the ruffled Cantor vainly sought a post under the Tsar of Russia. But the situation improved a little in 1730, when the old Rector of the Thomasschule died, and Bach's friend Gesner took his place. Gesner was a scholar. He re-

placed the boys' vernacular devotions by Latin prayers, and magnified Greek in their daily studies. Better still, he was a diplomatist, who soon adjusted the feuds and jealousies among the masters which had annihilated the discipline of the school. Best of all, he knew good music from bad. It was Gesner who wrote :—

In other respects I am a great admirer of antiquity ; but I maintain that this Bach of mine . . . unites in himself many Orpheuses and twenty Arions.

Poor Gesner, however, was an invalid who had to be carried to the school in a chair. After four strenuous and fruitful years of rule he died, and was succeeded by a young and erudite but overbearing Rector named Ernesti. Had Ernesti been simply indifferent to music, Bach and he might have found a way of living and working together ; but the new Rector hated music, and did not conceal his contempt of those who practised it. [Both men were quick-tempered—notably Bach, who was known in Leipsic as the man who tore off his wig and flung it at the head of Görner, the Thomas-Church organist, with the words, “You ought to be a shoemaker!”

Moreover, Ernesti was a young man, while Bach was the father of nineteen children. The war between the two waxed so fierce that in one matter Ernesti threatened to thrash and degrade any lad who obeyed Bach's orders. When the Council failed to intervene, Bach once more took his case to the King at Dresden. But although Bach at the end of this pugnacious year (1736) received the long-coveted title of Composer to the Saxon Court, the Rector's onslaughts against the Cantor's peace did not cease. One day, when a prefect had punished some of the younger scholars under Bach's instructions, the Rector ordained the public flogging of the prefect himself; and it was only by leaving the school altogether that the prefect saved his dignity and his skin. At another time Ernesti declared that boys who obeyed Bach would suffer for it by the confiscation of their pocket-money. Indeed, Ernesti once went so far as to accuse Bach of having succumbed to bribery and corruption.

But in spite of the pitiable bickerings which soured his official hours as Cantor, Bach seems to have been happy as a man and a composer. In the letter to his friend Erdmann, whereby



MORNING DEVOTIONS IN THE FAMILY OF BACH.

After Toby Rosenthal.

he sought entrance to the Tsar's service, he wrote :—

My eldest daughter is as yet unmarried. The children by my second marriage are still young, the eldest being only six. But they are all born musicians; and I can assure you that I am quite able to give a vocal or instrumental concert at any time solely with the aid of members of my family. Not only is my wife a good soprano, but my eldest daughter does not do badly.

Again, if his hours of creative activity were mainly hours of bliss, Bach at Leipsic must have had more than the average share of happiness; for he wrote there the great *Matthew Passion*, the still greater *Mass in B Minor*, the *Christmas Oratorio*, the second half of the *Wohltemperirte Klavier*, a Magnificat, and a vast collection of less familiar music, including nearly two hundred cantatas.

It is said that Bach composed five "Passions" altogether, but only two of them indisputably survive. The genesis of these deathless compositions is worth describing. In the second chapter of the present volume some account has been given of the manner of singing the Passion in

the Roman Church. Martin Luther retained a good deal of this ancient ceremonial; but his directions gradually ceased to be followed, until the solemn chanting of the Passion in the sanctuary gave place to a mere reading in the nave. Later on an attempt was made to enlist the whole congregation as chanters by abandoning the sacred words of the Evangelists in favour of a metrical hymn. As, however, this hymn was nearly three hundred lines long and was sung, without the organ, to a most monotonous psalm-tune, it conduced more to unedifying boredom than to holy Lenten sorrow.

When Bach was a boy of twelve, the Elector of Saxony gave up Lutheranism and returned to the Roman obedience. Thus, in Bach's time as in our own, Dresden could show a Catholic Court in the midst of a Protestant population. Frederick Augustus, the converted Elector, established his chapel on a princely basis; and no doubt the Holy Week music, enriched as was the ancient chant by polyphonic additions, would make a deep impression on those who heard it. Before long a desire to improve their own Passion-music showed itself among the

more earnest Lutherans at various points in the valley of the Elbe. For example, Handel, Keiser, and Mattheson each wrote a Passion at Hamburg ; but these works were disfigured by operatic music and, in some cases, by operatic words. The time was ripe for a masterpiece, and it was natural that it should come from Bach, an almost exclusively ecclesiastical composer who, although surrounded by opera-houses, had never written a note for the Opera in his life.

Doctor Solomon Deyling, Professor of Divinity at Leipsic, had the honour of setting Bach to work. He suggested that the Cantor should compose a Passion for solo voices, chorus, and orchestra. Bach's best and clearest singer was to declaim the narrative of the Evangelist, and other solo singers and a chorus were to deliver the speeches and exclamations. To these epic and dramatic elements meditative additions were to be made, or, to use Deyling's own word, there were to be "pauses" in the epic and the drama, during which arias would define the pious thoughts arising from the narrative or from the dramatic situation ; and as soon as pious thought had

aroused penitent love, the congregation were to be allowed to express their feeling in verses of familiar hymns sung to familiar tunes.

[St. Philip Neri the inventor of oratorios himself could hardly have devised a more edifying procedure, and as all the world knows, Bach rose magnificently to Deyling's idea. His fullness of piety is as evident throughout the scores as his musical genius. In its present form the *John Passion* appears to be a work of the Köthen period, drastically revised on Deyling's principles. The *Matthew Passion* was first performed in 1729, and is on a grander scale. For instance, in the latter work the words of our Lord are distinguished by an important accompaniment of strings from the other speeches, which are supported only by a bass filled out on a keyed instrument. Bach's successors at the Thoman Church continued to perform it for fifty years after his death and then dropped it completely. With all the musical faults of Englishmen, it cannot be said that they have ever dropped the *Messiah*.

Compared with Handel's work, the *Matthew Passion* is musically much more varied and elaborate.

rate. Indeed, there are more harmonic and contrapuntal devices in the *Matthew Passion* than in all Handel's oratorios added together. This is largely due to Bach's habit of treating not only each group of voices, but also each instrument as a separate part, whereas Handel rarely wrote independent instrumental parts, and preferred either to make the instruments double the vocal phrases or to set them playing mere figures of accompaniment. Yet the complexity of Bach's means, as noted on paper, rarely detracted from the dignity and tenderness of his ends in actual performance. It is to the lasting glory of Mendelssohn that he rescued the noble *Matthew Passion* from neglect, and that he revived it with reverent care on the hundredth anniversary of its first performance.

If Bach ever surpassed the *Matthew Passion*, it was only in his *Mass in B Minor*. But this astonishing work is self-disabled from wide popularity. As it is a Latin Mass throughout, it was never suitable for the use of Lutherans, in whose mass-books Luther retained very few Latin items. Nor is it much more practicable for Catholics, as the inordinate length of its move-

ments would leave the celebrant and the sacred ministers sitting or standing idle to the grave peril of their fervent recollection. Hence it has come to pass that a work which was designed to accompany the most sacred mysteries of Catholic worship is only to be heard oratorio-fashion in secular concert-halls. Bach wrote it as a courtier, and dedicated it to the Elector of Saxony in the following letter,¹ dated 27 July, 1733 :—

ILLUSTRIOUS ELECTOR : GRACIOUS MASTER,—To Your Kingly Highness I offer in deepest devotion this small fruit of the knowledge to which I have attained in music, with the most humble prayer that you will look upon it, not according to the poor composition, but with your world-renowned clemency, and therefore will take me under your powerful protection.

I have for some years had the direction of the music in the two chief churches of Leipsic, but have suffered several disagreeable things and my income has been reduced though I myself am blameless; but these troubles would easily be overcome if your Highness would grant me the favour of a decree, after conference with your Court orchestra.

The gracious granting of my humble prayer would

¹ In Naumann's *History of Music* (facing page 772, Vol. II, Eng. Trans.) there is an excellent facsimile of the original letter.

bind me to honour you everlastingly : and I offer myself to do obediently anything your Royal Highness may require of me in the way of composing church or orchestra music, and to give unwearied industry and to dedicate my whole strength to your service. With ever-increasing faithfulness, I remain your Royal Highness' most obedient servant,

JOHN SEBASTIAN BACH.

The Illustrious Elector took three years in coming to the point : but his most obedient servant's request was granted at last.

Next to the two "Passions," Bach's best-known work is his *Wohltemperirte Klavier*, or "Well-tempered Clavier." In Germany the name "Clavier" was given to the harpsichord, clavi-chord, spinet, and indeed all keyboard instruments. To explain the word "well-tempered" is less easy, as it involves abstruse points of acoustical science. But any reader who will take the trouble to make a simple experiment on a keyboard instrument which can sustain sounds (such as the harmonium) may gain some insight into the matter. He will find that the only perfect concords are the octaves, which yield pure and smooth tone. Let him hold down any

other pair of notes (even pairs which are, in theory, perfectly concordant) and his ear will detect more or less of pulse or "beat" or waviness in the resultant sound. This pulse is the result of tuning the instrument on the principle of "equal temperament" for which Bach and Rameau contended. Unlike a string or a human voice, the clavier is not a perfect musical instrument, and one cannot have all the twenty-four major and minor keys exactly in tune at the same time. Hence a "well-tempered" clavier, in Bach's sense, is tuned on a give-and-take principle by which all the keys bear some share of the instrument's imperfection.¹

Students of Handel and of the fine old clavier masters, such as Couperin, will have noticed that their compositions are never in remote keys. The writer remembers an unscientific enthusiast remarking that "good old Handel never worries you with more than four flats or sharps ; and whenever he lets you catch sight of an accidental G flat you know something fine is coming." Of

¹ (This imperfection is illustrated by the fact that G sharp and A flat are identical on a pianoforte, although they are two distinct sounds when truthfully produced from a fiddle-string or from the vocal chords of a singer.

course, the explanation is that Handel's harpsichord was tempered on the "unequal" principle by which the keys nearest to C boasted pure intonation at the expense of keys which were more remote. That unequal temperament has many claims on our respect is apparent to any one who has had a chance of hearing Handel's or Couperin's harpsichord pieces on equally and unequally tempered instruments in turn. Again, the vicious habit of learning singing at a modern "well-tempered" pianoforte accounts for a great deal of the bad intonation with which modern singers offend just ears. But while the unequal tempering at its best was very good indeed, its worst was so frightful that organ-tuners have long been accustomed to describe its raucousness by the expressive name of "The Wolf."

Bach's ear was fine enough to perceive the beauty of the unequal tuning in the simpler keys; but he maintained that this beauty was bought at too high a price. A composer who is restricted to half a dozen keys is like a huntsman who is obliged to keep to the lanes and roads. In composition one should be free to range through the whole cycle of keys. Accord-

ingly Bach decided that it was better to have twenty-four tiny wolf-cubs whining softly beside twenty-four milestones than to have a full-grown wolf baying hideously through the furthest and deepest thickets. The "Well-tempered Clavier" consists of preludes and fugues for all the twenty-four major and minor keys. Half the book, as we know it, was written at Köthen and the other half at Leipsic. The preludes are not always inwardly connected with the fugues, and the whole work, in spite of its dry title, is really a collection of clavier-pieces brimming with human as well as musical interest.

That there are still people who shudder at the threat of a Bach's fugue is almost entirely the fault of those organists who play every piece as if they are "practising" it like an exercise. When Bach is performed in an inhuman spirit and in what has been acutely called "the three-cornered style," one can understand the Philistine definition of a fugue as a musical performance in which the subject keeps rushing in and the audience keeps rushing out. The truth is that Bach's greatest organ-fugues

are more charged with high thought and noble feeling than most of the music cast in more romantic forms. Having very much to say, Bach said it in fugues, just as his predecessors had uttered deep oracles of life and death in mere suites of dances for worthless Courts.

Towards the end of his days, Bach was cheered by the patronage of Frederick the Great. Bach's son Emanuel was Frederick's Kapellmeister ; and in the spring of 1747, the Cantor of Leipsic was commanded to appear at Potsdam. To quote his son's account :—

When Frederick II had just prepared his flute, in the presence of the whole orchestra, for the evening's concert, the list of strangers who had arrived was brought to him. Holding his flute in his hand . . . he turned round with excitement to the assembled musicians, and, laying down his flute, exclaimed, "Gentlemen, old Bach is come !"

Without having time to change his clothes, old Bach was summoned to the Presence. The concert was given up. Frederick dragged his visitor from room to room, making him try all his seven pianos. At Bach's request the King gave him a fugue-subject (resembling the subject

of "And with His stripes" in Handel's *Messiah*) and while the composer extemporized on this and another theme, the King repeatedly cried "There is only one Bach!"

But not even the favour of the great Frederick could move Leipsic to value its Cantor. Two years later, when the old man was weak and blind, the Council chose Gottlob Harrer to succeed him "as soon as Chapel-Master and Cantor Herr Sebastian Bach should die." In no hurry to oblige his graceless employers, Bach lingered for a year. When he passed away, on 28 July, 1750, the Council's grief was expressed in the words, "Herr Bach was certainly a great musician: but we want a school-master, not a chapel-master." His widow, the faithful Anna Magdalena, ended her days in an almshouse and was buried as a pauper.

Since Mendelssohn, following in the footsteps of Mozart, revived Bach's music the praising of Bach has been so fervently taken in hand that some of his eulogists have set him higher than Palestrina and Handel. This is a pity. Others have repeated in cold print the unhappily framed statement that "Music owes as much to Bach as

Religion does to its Founder." This is not true. The oblivion into which most of Bach's music fell after his death was so complete that Burney dismissed it in a single paragraph of his four-volume History. It follows that the splendid movements of which Haydn and Gluck were the prominent pioneers and of which Beethoven and Wagner were the most glorious results proceeded independently of Bach.

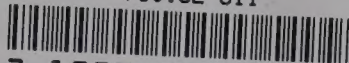
Bach has an even stronger claim to be the Musicians' Musician than has Edmund Spenser to be the Poet's Poet. When Schumann said of Bach, "I confess my sins daily to that Mighty One and seek to purge myself through him," he was speaking words with which every musician can sympathize. But the greatest artists are those who are greatest for all humanity, not those who are most interesting to their professional brethren. To breathe even the lightest word against the splendid genius of Bach is a distasteful task ; but it is surely well to protest against exaggeration before it provokes réaction. The writer of these pages may be wrong ; but, having listened to the *Matthew Passion* both immediately before and immediately after the Holy Week

music of the sixteenth-century masters, he does not find in Bach, grand as Bach is, the fullest utterance of the deepest and highest things in earth and in heaven. There is truth in the words of Bach's German contemporary whom Burney quotes as saying that if Bach had had Handel's clearness, simplicity, and feeling he would have been a greater man. Nevertheless, it must be added that he had the qualities of these defects ; and if Frederick the Great came to life again he could still exclaim, "There is only one Bach!"

THE END

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